

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE 1, 1870.

BESSY RANE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MADAM'S ADVICE.

A DINNER-PARTY at Dallory Hall. Arthur Bohun was in his chamber, lazily dressing for it. Not a large dinner, this : half a dozen or so, besides themselves ; and the hour six o'clock. Two gentlemen, bidden to it, would have to go away by train afterwards : on such occasions the dinner of necessity must be tolerably early.

Mr. North and Richard did not approve of Madam's dinners at the most favourable times : now, with all the care of the strike upon them and the great trouble looming in the distance if that strike lasted, the breaking up of their business, the decay of their means, they looked on these fast-recurring banquets as most reprehensible. They were without power to stop them : remonstrance availed not with Madam. Sometimes the dinners were impromptu, or nearly so ; Madam inviting afternoon callers at the Hall to stay ; or bringing home a carriage-full of guests with her. As was partially the case on this day.

Captain Arthur Bohun, who liked to take most things easily, dressing included, stood hair-brush in hand. He had drawn aside from the glass, and was looking from the open window. His thoughts were busy. They ran on that little episode of the morning, when Madam, passing in her carriage, had seen him with Ellen Adair, and had chosen to make display of her sentiments on the subject in the manner described. That it would not end there, Arthur felt sure : Madam would inevitably treat him to a little more of her mind. It was rather a singular thing—as if Fate had been intervening with its usual cross purposes—for circumstances so to have ordered it that Madam should still be in ignorance of their intimacy. Nearly always when Mrs.

Cumberland was at home, it chanced that Madam was away; and, when Madam was at the Hall, Mrs. Cumberland was elsewhere. Thus, during Mrs. Cumberland's prolonged stay at Niton, Madam's presence blessed her household: the very week that that lady returned to Dallory House, Madam took her departure, and had but recently returned. She had spent the interval in Germany. Sidney North, her well-beloved son, giving trouble as usual to all who were connected with him, had found England rather warm in early spring, and had betaken himself to Germany. His chief point of sojourn was Hamburg; and Madam, with her daughter Matilda, had been making it hers since the spring. Mr. North, in the glad relief her absence brought him, had used every exertion to supply her with the money she so rapaciously sent home for. It would appear that the accommodation had not been sufficient; for—as was soon to be discovered by Richard—the cheques shown to him by his father had been drawn by her at Hamburg. And so, as Fate or Fortune had willed it, Mrs. North had been out of the way of watching the progress of the intimacy between her son and Ellen Adair.

A quick knock at the chamber-door, and Madam swept in, waiting for no response: a large crimson rose, just brought from the green-house, adorning her jet-black hair; her white-silk gown rustling and trailing after her. As well as though she had already spoken, Arthur knew what she had come for. He thought to himself that she was losing no time and must have hurried over her toilette purposely. The carriage had not long got home, for she and Matilda had been driving to a distance, and remained out to luncheon. Arthur, not moving from where he was, began brushing at his hair hap-hazard.

"I suppose I am late, Madam?"
"Was that *you* that I passed this afternoon in Dallory Ham, talking to some girl at a house-door?" began Madam, taking no notice of his remark.

"It was me safe enough; I had been calling on Mrs. Cumberland," replied Arthur carelessly. "Dick also. By the way you stared, I fancied you scarcely knew me."

A little bit of banter. Madam might take it seriously, or not, as she chose. She went round to the other side of the dressing table, and stood opposite to him at the window.

"What girl were you talking with?"
"Girl! I was with Miss Adair."

"Who is she, Arthur?"
"She is Mrs. Cumberland's ward."

"What do you know of her?"
"I know her as being at Mrs. Cumberland's. I see her when I go there."

Was he really indifferent? Standing there brushing away at his hair lazily, now the right way, now the wrong, speaking in the most supine

manner, his apparently supreme indifference could not be exceeded. Madam scanned his face in momentary silence : he was closely intent upon two sparrows, fighting over a reddening cherry on the branch of the proximate tree.

"Fight away, young gentlemen. Battle it out. You'll get all the better appetite for your supper."

"Will you attend to me for a short while, Captain Bohun," spoke Madam irritably.

"Certainly. I am attending," was the Captain's ready answer.

Just for an instant Madam paused. This was not one of the daily petty grievances that she made people miserable over, but a trouble to her of awful meaning ; almost as of life or death. In this, her own grave interests, she could control her temper, and she thought it might be the best policy to do so while she dealt with it.

"Arthur, you know that you are becoming more valuable to me," she said, with soft calmness ; and Arthur Bohun opened his surprised ears at the words and tone. "Since Sidney took up his abode away from England, and cannot come back to it, poor fellow, for the present you are all I have here. If I speak, it is for your welfare."

"Very good of you, I'm sure," returned Arthur, seeing she waited for him to say something : and feeling how two-faced the words were, mother of his though she was. "What is it you wish to say ?"

"It's about that girl : Miss—what do you call her?—Adair. Young men will be young men ; soldiers especially ; I know that. But wrong is wrong, and it cannot by the most ingenious sophistry be converted into right. It is quite wrong to play with these village girls : as you seem to be doing with Miss Adair.

Arthur threw back his head as though his pride were hurt. Madam had seen just the same movement in his father.

"I have no intention of *playing* with Miss Adair."

A gleam shot from her eyes, half fear, half defiance. She bit her lip : and went on in a still softer tone.

"You cannot mean anything *worse*, Arthur."

"I do not understand you, Madam. Worse?"

"Anything serious. To play with village girls is reprehensible ; but—"

"I beg your pardon, mother—this is quite unnecessary. The playing with village girls—whatever that may mean—is not a habit of mine, and never has been. The caution might be more appropriate, if applied to your men servants than it is to me."

"Allow me to finish, Arthur. To play with village girls is reprehensible ; but to intend anything serious with one would be far more so in your case. Will you profit by the caution ?"

"If you wish me to comprehend the word 'serious,' you must speak out. What does it mean ?"

"It means *marriage*," she answered, with a burst of temper—so far as tone might convey it. "I allude to this absurd intimacy of yours with Miss Adair. You must be intimate with the girl: your look and attitude, as I passed to-day, proved it."

"And if I did mean marriage: what then?"

He asked the question jokingly, laughing a little: but he was not prepared for the effect it had on his mother. Her eyes flashed fire, her lips trembled, her face turned whiter than death.

"Marriage! With *her*? You must be dreaming, Arthur Bohun."

"Not dreaming; joking," he said lightly. "You may be at ease, Madam. I have no intention of marrying any one at present."

"You must never marry Miss Adair."

"No?"

"Arthur Bohun, you are treating all this with mockery," she exclaimed; beginning in truth to believe that he really was. And the relief was great; though the tacit disrespect angered her. "How dare you imply that you could think seriously of these village girls?—only to annoy and frighten me."

"You must be easily frightened to-day, Madam. I don't think I did imply it. As to Miss Adair——"

"Yes, as to Miss Adair," fiercely interrupted Madam. "Go on."

"I was about to say that in speaking of Miss Adair, we might as well recognise her true position. It is not quite respectful to be alluding to her as a 'village girl.' She is a lady, born and bred."

"Perhaps you will next say that she is equal to the Bohuns?"

"I do not wish to say it. Don't you think this conversation may as well cease, Madam?" added Arthur, after a short pause. "Why should it have been raised? One might suppose I had asked your consent to my marriage: whereas you know perfectly well that I am a poor man—with not the slightest chance of taking a wife."

"Poor men get engaged sometimes, Arthur, thinking they'll wait—and wait. Seeing you with that girl—the world calls her good-looking, I believe—I grew into an awful fright for your sake. It would be most disastrous for you to marry beneath your rank: a Bohun never holds up his head afterwards if he does that: and I thought I ought to speak a word of warning to you. You must take a suitable wife when you do marry: one fit to mate with the future Sir Arthur Bohun."

"To mate with plain Arthur Bohun. To call me the future Sir Arthur is stretching possibility out very wide indeed, Madam," he added laughing.

"Not at all. You will as surely succeed as that I am telling it you. Look at that puny James Bohun! A few years, at most, will see the last of him."

"I hope not, for his father's sake. Any way, he may live long enough to marry and leave children behind him. Is your lecture at an

end, Madam?" he jestingly concluded. "If so, perhaps you may as well leave me to get my coat on; or I shall have to keep the dinner waiting."

"I have another word," said Madam; "your coat can keep. Miss Dallory dines here."

"Miss Dallory! I thought she was in Switzerland. Did she come over in a balloon to dine with us?"

"She is staying with her brother Frank—I and Matilda called at Ham Court just now and brought her with us."

"Did you bring him?"

"I did not see him: they said he was not in the way. But now—why do I mention this?"

"As a bit of gossip for me, I suppose. It's very good of you. My coat and the dinner can certainly wait."

"I have brought Miss Dallory here for your sake, Arthur Bohun," was the rejoinder, spoken with emphatic meaning. "*She* is the young lady you will do well to think of as your future wife."

Madam went out of the room with much stately rustle, and swept down stairs. Another minute, and the door opened again to admit Richard North. Captain Bohun had not progressed further in dressing, or stirred from his place; but was leaning against the window-frame in abstraction, whistling softly.

"Madam's in a way, is she not?" began Richard in a low tone. "My window was open, Arthur, and I was obliged to catch a word here and there. I made all kinds of noises, but you did not take the hint."

"*She* didn't; and I would as soon you heard as not," was Captain Bohun's answer. "You are ready I see, Dick."

"The course of true love never did run smooth, you know," said Richard laughing.

"And never will. Whenever I read of the old patriarchial days, in which a man had only to fix on a wife and bring her home to his tent; and look on all that has to be considered in these—money, and suitability of family, and settlements—I wonder whether it can be the same world. Madam need not fear that I have any chance of marrying."

"Or you'd not be long a bachelor."

"I don't know about that."

"You don't know! Why you do know: and so do I. I've seen how it is for some weeks now, Arthur."

"Seen what?"

Richard smiled.

"Seen what?"

"How it is between you and Ellen Adair."

"You think you have!"

"Think! You love her, don't you?"

Arthur Bohun put down the hair-brush gently, which he had held all the while, and moved to get his coat.

"Dick, old fellow, whether it will come to anything between us, or not, I cannot tell," he said, his voice strangely deep, his brow flushing with emotion; "but I shall never care for any one else as I care for her."

"Then secure her," answered Dick.

"I might be tempted to do it, in spite of my mother, had I the wherewithal to set up a home. But I've not."

"You have more than double what Rane and Bessy have."

"Rane and Bessy!—But Bessy is one in a thousand. I couldn't ask a wife to come home to me on that."

"Just as you think fit, of course. Take care, though, you don't get her snapped up. I should fear it if it were my case. Ellen Adair is the loveliest girl I ever saw, and I think her the sweetest. I could but look at her as we sat in Mrs. Cumberland's room this morning. Other men will be finding it out, Arthur: if they have not already done so."

Arthur never answered. He had gone back to his former post and was leaning against the window-frame, looking out dreamily.

"Madam objects, I presume?"

"I presume she would if I put it to her," assented Arthur, as if the proposition admitted of no dispute.

"I don't see why she should. Or you either."

"I'm afraid, Dick, we Bohuns have our full share of family pride."

"But—Mr. Adair is no doubt a gentleman."

"Oh yes. That is, not in trade," added Arthur carelessly.

"Well, a gentleman is a gentleman," said Richard.

"Of course. But I take it for granted that he holds no position in the world. And we Bohuns, you know—"

Arthur stopped. Richard North laughed. "You Bohuns would like to mate only *with* position. A daughter—for example—of the Lord Lieutenant of the county."

"Exactly," assented Arthur, echoing the laugh, but very much in earnest, for all that. "Madam has been recommending Miss Dallory to my notice."

"Who?" cried Richard, rather sharply.

"Mary Dallory."

"You might do worse," observed Richard after a pause.

"No doubt of that, friend. She is down stairs."

"Who is down stairs?"

"She. So Madam has just informed me."

"There's the gong."

"And be hanged to it!" returned Arthur, getting into his coat. "I wish to goodness Madam did not give us the trouble of putting on

dinner dress every other day! Neither are entertainments seemly in your house during these troubled times."

"What's more, I don't see how they will get paid for, if the trouble continues," candidly spoke Richard. "Madam must be uncommonly sanguine to expect they can be."

"Or careless," returned Arthur Bohun in a low tone. "Dick, old fellow, it's a bad sign when a man has no good word to give his mother."

That every grain of filial affection had long gone out of his breast and been replaced by a feeling near akin to shame and contempt, Arthur Bohun was only too conscious of. He strove to be dutiful; but it was at times a hard task. Living under the same roof as his mother, her sins against good manners and good feeling, were brought under his notice perpetually; he was more sensitively alive to them than even others could be.

Since Arthur Bohun had quitted the army and recovered from the long sickness that followed on his wound, Dallory Hall had been his ostensible home. Latterly he had made it really such; for Dallory Ham contained an attraction from which he could not tear himself. Ellen Adair had his heart's best love: and, far from her he could not wander. A pure, ardent love, honourable as every true passion must be in an honourable man, but swaying his every action with its power. Sir Nash Bohun invited him in vain. His aunt, Miss Bohun, with whom he was a great favourite, could not think why he went so rarely to see her, or, when he did go, made his visit a flying one. Arthur Bohun possessed a few hundreds a year: about four: just enough to keep him as a gentleman; and he had none of the bad habits that run away with young men's money. Miss Bohun would leave him fairly off when she died: so he was at ease on the score of the future. One day, after he had been at Dallory Hall for a few months, he put a hundred-pound bank-note into Richard North's hands.

"What is this for?" questioned Richard.

Arthur told him. The embarrassments in the Hall's financial department (caused by Madam) were lightly touched on: this was Arthur's contribution towards his own share of the cost. In the surprise of the moment Richard North's spirit rose, and fought at it. Arthur quietly persisted.

"As long as I pitch myself among you in the home tent here, I shall hand over this sum every six months. To you, Dick: there's nobody else to be trusted with it. If I gave it to Bessy, she would be safe to speak of it, and it might be wiled out of her."

"I never heard of such nonsense in my life," cried Richard. "You will not get me to take it. I'd not countenance anything of the kind."

"Yes you will, Dick. You'd not like me to take up my abode at the

'Dallory Arms.' I declare on my honour I shall do so, if I am forced to be as a guest at the Hall."

"But, Arthur——"

"Dick, my friend, there's no need of argument. I mean what I say. Don't drive me away. The 'Dallory Arms' would not be very comfortable as a home; and I should drift away, goodness knows where."

"As if one inmate, more or less, made any difference in our home expenses."

"As if it did not. I have no right or claim whatever to be living on your father. Don't make me small in my own eyes, frère Richard. You know that you'd feel the same in my place, and do the same. No one need know of this but our two selves, Dick."

Richard gave in : he saw that Arthur was resolute : and, after all, it was just. So he took the bank-note to account, and told his father ; and Arthur Bohun stayed on, his conscience at peace. Once, in one of Madam's furious onslaughts of temper, when she spared nobody, she had abused her son for staying at the Hall, and living upon her. Upon her ! Arthur parried the attack with a careless kind of good humour, merely saying he was Dick's guest. When Dick turned him out of the Hall he should go.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARY DALLORY.

THE assembled guests waited in the drawing-room. Madam, with a face of gracious suavity, was bestowing her smiles on all, after her manner in society, her white silk dress gleaming in its richness. A slight frown crossed her brow, however, at the tardy entrance of her son and Richard North.

"We have waited for you," she rather sharply said. "Dinner has been announced."

Richard found his father did not intend to be present, and that he must act as host, which was nothing new. Glancing round the room, he was advancing to Miss Dallory—there was no married lady present save Madam—when Madam's voice rang out cold and clear.

"Take Eliza Field, Richard North. Arthur, you will conduct Miss Dallory."

Now that was all wrong, according to the rules of etiquette. Miss Dallory, the great heiress, whose family was of some note in the county, should have fallen to Richard: Eliza Field, a middle-aged lady, had only been Matilda North's governess. But Madam had a way of enforcing her own mandates ; or, rather, of letting people know they might not be disputed. There was a moment's awkwardness : Richard and Arthur both stood with arrested footsteps ; and then each advanced to

the appointed lady. But Miss Dallory nearly upset it all : she turned away from Captain Bohun to Richard, her hand outstretched.

"How do you do, Mr. Richard North?"

He clasped it for a moment in his. Madam, who had a shrewd way of making guesses, and seeing things that nobody else saw, had picked up a notion long ago, that had Richard North's fortunes been in the ascendant, he might have forgotten the wide gulf lying between him and Mary Dallory—she patrician-born, he plebeian—and asked her to step over it.

"I did not know you had returned, Miss Dallory, until a few minutes ago," said Richard.

"No! I have been home two days."

They separated. Madam was sweeping on to the dining-room on the arm of a Colonel Carter, whose acquaintance she had made at Hamburg, and the rest had to follow. Richard brought up the rear with Eliza Field.

Miss Dallory, a rather tall and graceful girl of two-and-twenty, sat between Arthur Bohun and Richard North. She was not particularly handsome, but very pleasing. A fair-complexioned face with plenty of good sense in it, gray eyes set rather deep in the head, and soft, dark-brown hair. Her manners were remarkably open and ready ; her speech candidly independent. It was this perhaps—the pleasantness of the speech and manners—that made her a favourite with everybody.

The Dallory family were very wealthy. There were three of them ; Miss Dallory and her two brothers, John and Frank, both older than herself. They had been left orphans at an early age : their father's will having bequeathed his property nearly equally among the three : the portion of it entailed on his elder son lay in another county. To the surprise of many people it was found that he had left Dallory Hall to his daughter : so that, in point of fact, this Miss Dallory, sitting at Mr. North's dinner-table, was the owner of the house. It had been the residence of the Dallory family during Mr. Dallory's lifetime : after his death, the trustees let it on lease to Mr. North. Which lease was purchased : so that Mr. North had no rent to pay for it. The lease, however, had now all but terminated. Madam hoped to be able to get it renewed : perhaps that might be one of the reasons why she was now setting out to pay court to Mary Dallory. That young lady came into her property when she was one-and-twenty ; and all power lay in her own hands. Nearly two years ago Miss Dallory had gone on the continent with an aunt, Mrs. Leasom. Illness had prolonged Mrs. Leasom's stay there, and they had but now returned. Mrs. Leasom remained at her home in London ; Miss Dallory came down at once to her younger brother's house—an exceedingly pretty place just beyond the Ham. And that's enough of explanation.

The dinner progressed. Miss Dallory talked chiefly with Richard :

next to whom she sat ; Arthur Bohun, on the other side, was rather silent and glum. She was telling of her travels : and jestingly complaining of finding what she called a grand dinner, when she had thought Mrs. North was only bringing her to dine en famille—as her dress proved. Which was nothing but a coloured muslin.

"Don't laugh at me, Mr. Richard North. If you had been living in a remote village of Switzerland for months, dining off bouilli and a thin chicken in your aunt's chamber, you would think this grand yourself."

"I did not laugh," answered Richard. "It is a vast deal grander than I like."

"Do you get it every day?"

"Nearly."

"Where's Mr. North?" she asked, slightly dropping her voice.

Richard shook his head. "The grandeur has tired him, Miss Dallory. He dines nearly always in his parlour : I join him as often as I can."

"I hear he is breaking," she continued, her deep gray eyes looking straight at Richard, pity and concern in their depths. "Frank says so."

"He is breaking sadly. The prolonged strain is too much for him."

Madam glanced down the table, and spoke in a tart tone.

"Are you attending to Miss Field, Richard?"

Miss Field was on his left hand ; Miss Dallory on his right.

"Yes, Madam. She heard," added he to Miss Dallory, scarcely moving his lips.

"And it was high treason, I suppose," rejoined that young lady confidentially. "There have been changes in your home, Mr. Richard, since I was last here. Mr. North's first children were all in it then."

"And now two of them have gone out of it. Bessy to another home : Edmund to—his last one."

"Ah, I heard all. How sad it must have been for you and Mr. North ! John and Frank wrote me word that they followed him to the grave."

"Very sad for him as well as us," assented Richard. "But he is better off."

"Who sent that wicked letter?"

Richard North dropped his glance on his plate as he answered, apparently intent on what was there. Miss Dallory's keen eyes had been on his : and she used to read a great deal that lay within them.

"There has been no discovery at all."

"It was thought to be Mr. Tim Wilks, I believe."

"It was certainly not he," said Richard, rather hastily.

"No ! He had at least something to do with the mischief, if he did not write the letter."

"Yes. But without intending evil. The next to leave the home here may be myself," he added.

"*You!*"

"Of course you have heard that our works are at a standstill? The men have struck."

"That's old news: I heard it in Switzerland."

"If we are not able to re-open them—and I begin to think we shall not be—I must go out in the world and seek employment elsewhere."

"Nonsense, Richard North!"

"If you reflect for a moment, you will see that it is all sober earnest, Miss Dallory. When a man does not possess the means of living, he must work to earn one."

She said no more then. And when she spoke again the subject was changed.

"Is Bessy's marriage a happy one?"

"Very—as it seems to me. The worst is, Rane gets on as badly as ever in his profession."

"But why does he?"

"I know not. Except that Madam undoubtedly works—always works—to keep him back."

"What a shame! He shall come and attend me. I'll get up some headaches on purpose."

Richard laughed.

"We have had changes also, since you and I met," resumed Miss Dallory. "But not sad ones. I have become my own mistress in the world; am independent of everybody. And Frank has taken up his abode at Ham Court for a permanency."

"I hope you intend to make a good use of your independence," said Richard with gravity.

"Don't I. And I shall *be* independent; you may rely upon that."

"We heard it rumoured sometime ago that you were likely to lose your independence, Miss Dallory."

"I! In what way?"

"By getting married."

Their eyes met for a moment, and then dropped. Miss Dallory laughed lightly.

"Did the news penetrate as far as this? Well, it never was 'likely,' Mr. Richard North. A—gentleman asked me; but I caught up an idea that he wanted my money more than he did myself, and so—nothing came of it."

"Who was he?"

"It would not be fair to him to tell."

"Right. Thank you for correcting me," spoke Richard in his earnest way. "I ought to feel shame for asking. I beg your pardon; and his."

Happening to glance at the young lady, he saw that her face had

turned crimson with blushes. A rare thing for Miss Dallory. She was too self-possessed to display emotion on light occasions.

"Have you seen Ham Court lately?" she resumed looking up; and the blushes made her look very pretty.

"Not since your brother came to it. He has not been here long, you know. I called one day, but they said Mr. Dallory was out?"

"The place is so nice now. He has made alterations and done it up beautifully. You must come again."

"With pleasure," answered Richard. "How long shall you remain with him?"

"As long as he will have me. I am not going away yet. I shall make it my home. Frank has quiet tastes and so have I: and we intend to live together like a brother-and-sister Darby and Joan, and grow into an old maid and old bachelor."

Richard smiled. "How is it Francis did not come with you to dinner?"

"He was not in the way to get an invitation. May I dare to tell you why?" she added below her breath. "When we saw Madam's carriage driving up, Frank disappeared. 'Say I am out, Polly,' was his order to me. He and Madam never got on well: as a little boy he was terribly afraid of her, and I think the feeling lasts. When I went to put my bonnet on, I found him shut up in his room with the blinds down. He wished me joy of my visit, and promised to come and walk home with me in the evening."

"Take care of Madam's ears," breathed Richard.

"She cannot hear me. Your neighbour even cannot. Arthur may"—looking round at Captain Bohun questioningly—"but I don't mind him."

"Talk away," said Arthur. "Dick and I often wish we had a remote room with locked door and drawn blinds to use as a refuge in home storms. Heaven knows it is the pain of my life to be able to say this."

How suggestive it was!—of the estimation in which Mrs. North was publicly held. For her son to confess this, for Miss Dallory with her refined mind and feeling to have called it forth, spoke badly for Madam.

She—Madam—rose from table early. Something in the arrangements seemed not to suit her. It was a warm and lovely evening, and they went out on the lawn. Miss Dallory slipped round the corner of the house to the window of Mr. North's parlour.

It stood open and he sat just within it. Sat with his hands on his knees, and his head drooping. Miss Dallory started back: not so much because his face was thin and worn, but at its expression of hopeless despair. In her two years' absence, he seemed to have aged ten.

She stepped over the threshold, and gently laid her hands on his. He looked up like a man bewildered.

"Why—it—it—it cannot be Mary Dallory."

"It is Mary Dallory; come home at last. You'll kiss me, won't you, dear Mr. North."

He kissed her very fondly. In the old days when John North was supposed to be the most rising man, in a commercial point of view, in the county, Mr. Dallory had thought it worth while to court his friendship, and Mr. North had been asked to stand to his little girl. Mary—after she lost her own parents—was wont to say she belonged to the Hall, and she used to be often there. Her aunt, Mrs. Leasom, who had been a Miss Dallory once, was left personal guardian to the children, with Ham Court as her residence until the younger son should be of age, to whom it would then lapse. But Mrs. Leasom spent a large portion of her time in London, and sometimes the children had not seen their native place, Dallory, for years together.

"When did you come home, my dear?"

"To England a week ago. To Ham Court only yesterday. Do you know that you are much changed?"

"Ay. There's nothing but change in this life, my dear. The nearer we approach the end of our days, the faster our sorrows seem to come upon us: I have had more than my share of them; and they have changed me. Turning round, to this quarter, to that quarter, I see only one source of comfort left to me in the wide world."

"And that?" she asked, half kneeling at his feet.

"My dear son Richard. Nobody knows the good son he has been to me; the sacrifices he has made. Nobody, save God."

Miss Dallory gave no answer to this. He was stroking her soft hair in deep abstraction, thinking no doubt of his many troubles—for he always was thinking of them—when the person in question entered; Richard North. Miss Dallory rose and sat down on a chair decorously.

She remained but a minute or two now, and spent the time talking and laughing. Richard gave her his arm to take her back to the company. Miss Dallory apparently was in no hurry to go, for she lingered over some of the near flower-beds.

"Is the strike a serious matter?" she questioned, her voice taking a confidential tone.

"As serious as it is possible for any matter of the kind to be," replied Richard.

"You and your men were always on the best of terms: why did they become dissatisfied with you?"

"They never became dissatisfied with me. The Trades Unions' agents stepped in and persuaded them they would be better off if they could work less time and be paid more wages. The men listened: it was

only natural : and presented themselves to me with these new demands. I did not grant them, and they struck. That's the whole truth in a nutshell, Miss Dallory."

"I suppose you could not grant them?"

"Right. I would not grant them upon principle ; I could not because my profits did not afford it. I am quite certain of one thing : that if I had acceded, in a short while the men would have demanded more. The Trades Unions will never allow them to be satisfied, until—".

"Until what?" she asked, for Richard had stopped.

"Until the country is ruined. Until its trade has left it."

"It is a serious thing," she said—and she was very grave now. "I suppose you would take the men on again at the old terms?"

"And be glad to do it."

"And they will not be taken?"

"No. I have offered, in regard to their demand for increased wages, to meet them half way. It is of no use."

"Then I think those men deserve to learn what want of employment means," she returned warmly. "I thought your men were intelligent ; I used to know many of them. When I go amongst them—and that may be to-morrow—I shall ask if they have taken leave of their senses. What does Mrs. Gass say to it all?"

Richard smiled a little. Mrs. Gass said more than he did, he answered, but it was equally useless.

"And I suppose it is the strike that is troubling Mr. North? I do think him so changed."

"It troubles him of course—and there are other things."

"Does it trouble *you*?" asked Miss Dallory, in a pointed tone, as she looked straight at him.

"Trouble me!" he rejoined, in surprise at the superfluous question. "Why, see you not what it involves—unless we can go on again? Simply ruin. Ruin for me, and for my father with me. There's your brother."

They had reached the lawn at length, and saw Francis Dallory, who had come to walk home with his sister. He was a short, fair young man with an open countenance. Madam had already seized upon him.

"Where's Arthur?" demanded Madam imperiously, as Miss Dallory came into view on Richard's arm. "I thought he was with you."

Miss Dallory answered that she had not seen Arthur Bohun since she quitted the dinner-table. Nobody had seen him—that Madam could discover. She suspected he must have gone off somewhere to smoke ; and would have liked to put his pipe behind the fire.

But the pipe was not in fault. Arthur Bohun, possibly thinking there were enough without him, had surreptitiously made his escape, and gone for a stroll towards the Ham. It took him so near to Mrs.

Cumberland's that he said to himself he might as well call in and ask after her headache—that she had been suffering from in the morning.

Sophistry! Nothing but sophistry. Captain Arthur Bohun did not really care whether the headache was worse or better: until a minute ago he had not even remembered that she had complained of one. The naked truth was, that he could not bear to rest for even one evening without a sight of Ellen Adair. No mother ever hungered for a lost child, as he hungered for her presence.

They were at tea. Mrs. Cumberland, Ellen, and Mr. Seeley. When Jelly showed Captain Bohun in, the doctor was just taking his second cup. Ellen, who sat at the tea-tray, asked Captain Bohun if he would like some, and he rather savagely answered No. Warfare lay in his mind. What business had that man to be sitting there on a footing of companionship with Ellen Adair?

Mrs. Cumberland's head was a little worse, if anything, she replied, thanking Captain Bohun for his solicitude in regard to it. Mr. Seeley had given her two draughts of something—ether, she believed—in the afternoon: but they had not done the head any good. Arthur pushed back his golden hair in a passion. Then the man had had the impudence to go there in the afternoon, as well as morning and evening! *How* could Mrs. Cumberland so far forget the fitness of propriety as to allow him to take tea with her—to invite him, no doubt—when she knew that by so doing he must also take it with Ellen Adair?

It might have come to a question of which would have sat out the other—for Mr. Seeley detected somewhat of the feelings of Arthur Bohun's mind, and resented them, considering himself as good a man as he, in regard of possessing the same right to a chance of woman's favour—but for the entrance of Dr. Rane. Dr. Rane appeared to have no present intention of leaving again: for he plunged into a hot discussion with his brother practitioner touching some difficult question in surgery, which seemed quite likely to continue all night: and Arthur Bohun rose. He would have remained on willingly: but he was ever sensitive as to intruding, and he fancied Mrs. Cumberland might wonder why he stayed.

As he went out, Francis Dallory and his sister were passing on their walk homeward. Captain Bohun turned with them, and went to the end of the Ham.

The shades of evening—nay, of night—had stolen over the earth as he went back; the light night of summer. The north-west was bright with its blue-green tinge of opal; a star or two twinkled in the heavens. Dr. Rane was pacing his garden walks, his wife on his arm.

"Good night, Bessy," he called out, to her whom he had always regarded as his step-sister.

"Good night, Arthur," came the hearty rejoinder—for Bessy had recognised his voice.

Onwards for a few steps—only a few—and it brought Arthur Bohun level with the window of Mrs. Cumberland's drawing-room. It was not yet lighted. At the window, their heads nearly close together, stood the other doctor and Ellen Adair. In Captain Bohun's desperate anger, he stared Ellen full in the face, and made no movement of recognition. Turning his head away with a contemptuous movement, quite plainly discernible in the dusk, he went striding on.

Shakespeare never read more truly the human heart than when he said that jealousy makes the food it feeds on. Arthur Bohun went home nearly mad: not so much with jealousy in its narrow sense, as with indignation at the doctor's most iniquitous presumption. Could he have analysed his own heart in due fairness, he would have found full trust in the good faith of Ellen Adair. But he was swayed by man's erring nature, and yielded to it wilfully.

How innocent it all was! how little suggestive of fear, could Captain Bohun but have read events correctly. There had been no invitation to tea at all: Mr. Seeley had gone in just as they began to take it, and was offered a cup by Mrs. Cumberland. As to the being together at the window, Ellen had been standing there to catch the fading light for her wool work, perhaps as an excuse for leaving him and Mrs. Cumberland to converse alone; and he had just come up to her to say Good night as Captain Bohun passed.

If we could but divine the real truth of these fancies when jealousy puts them before us in its false and glaring light, some phases of our lives might be all the happier. Arthur Bohun lay tossing the whole night long on his sleepless pillow, tormenting himself by wondering what Ellen Adair's answer to Seeley would be. That the fellow in his audacity was proposing to her as they stood at the window, he could have sworn before the Lord Chief Baron of England. It was a wretched night; his tumultuous thoughts were fit to kill him. Arthur had Collins's "Ode to the Passions" by heart; but it never occurred to him to recal any part of it to profit now.

"Thy numbers, Jealousy, to nought were fixed,
Sad proof of thy distressful state.
Of differing themes the veering song was mixed:
And now it courted Love; now, raving, called on Hate."

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE AMONG THE ROSES.

THE early sunshine is a great purifier. Fancies find but little room in the matter-of-fact bustle of every day life. When Arthur Bohun rose, his senses had returned to him. That Ellen Adair's love was his, and that no fear existed of her accepting any other man, let him be prince

or peasant, reason told him. He wanted to see her : for *that* his heart was always yearning ; but on this morning when, as it seemed, he had been judging her harshly, the necessity seemed overwhelmingly great. His impatient feet would have carried him to Mrs. Cumberland's after breakfast ; but his spirit was a little rebellious yet, and kept him back. He'd not show his impatience, he thought ; he'd not go down until the afternoon ; and he began to resort to all kinds of expedients to kill the earlier time. He walked with Richard North the best part of the way to Dallory ; he came back and wrote to his aunt, Miss Bohun ; he went pottering about the flower-beds with Mr. North. As the day wore on towards noon, his restless feet betook him to Ham Lane—which the reader has not visited since he saw Dr. Rane hastening through it on the dark and troubled night that opened this history. The hedges were green now, blooming with their dog-roses of delicate-pink and white, redolent with the perfume of sweet-briar. Captain Bohun went along, switching at these same pleasant hedges with his cane. Avoiding the turning that would take him out into Dallory Ham, he continued his way to another lane, less luxurious, more rare ; the lane that ran along the back of the houses of the Ham, and which was familiarly called by their inhabitants "the back lane." Strolling onwards, he had the satisfaction of finding himself passing by the dead wall of Mrs. Cumberland's garden, and of seeing the roof and chimneys of her house. Should he go round and call ? A few steps lower down, just beyond Dr. Rane's, there was an opening that would take him. He had told himself he would not go until the afternoon ; and now it was barely twelve o'clock : should he call, or should he not ?

Moving on, in his indecision, at a slow pace, he had got just opposite Dr. Rane's back garden door, when it suddenly opened, and the doctor came forth.

"Ah, how d'ye do?" said the doctor, rather surprised at seeing Arthur Bohun there. "Were you coming in this way? The door was bolted."

"Only taking a stroll," carelessly replied Captain Bohun. "How's Bessy?"

"Quite well. She is in the dining-room, if you'll come in and see her."

Nothing loth, Arthur Bohun stepped in at once, the doctor continuing on his way. Mrs. Rane was darning stockings. She and Arthur had always been the very best of friends, quite brother and sister. Meek and gentle as ever, she looked, sitting there with her smooth, curling hair, and the loving expression in her mild, soft eyes. Arthur sat down and talked with her ; his glance roving ever to that other house, seeking the form of one whom he did not see.

"Do you know how Mrs. Cumberland is this morning?" he enquired of Bessy.

"I have not heard. Mr. Seeley has been there; for I saw him in the dining-room with Ellen Adair."

Arthur Bohun's pulses froze to ice. Figuratively speaking, his golden hair bristled up, stiff and straight.

"I think they are both in the garden now."

"Are they?" snapped Arthur. "His patients must get on nicely, if he idles away his mornings in a garden."

Bessy looked up from her darning. "I don't mean that Seeley's there, Arthur: I mean Mrs. Cumberland and Ellen."

As Bessy spoke, Jelly was seen to come out of Mrs. Cumberland's house, penetrate amidst the trees, and return with her mistress.

"Some one has called, I suppose?" remarked Bessy.

Captain Bohun thought the gods had made the opportunity for himself expressly. He went out, stepped over the small wire fence, and disappeared in the direction that Mrs. Cumberland had come from, believing it would lead him to Ellen Adair.

In the secluded and beautiful spot where we first saw her (but where we shall not often, alas! see her again) she sat. The flowers of early spring were out then; the richer summer flowers were blooming now. A natural bower of roses seemed to encompass her about; the shrubs clustered, the trees o'er-shadowed her over-head. The falling-cascade was trickling softly as ever down the artificial rocks, murmuring its monotonous cadence; the birds sang to it and to each other from branch to branch; glimpses of the green lawn and of brilliantly-hued flowers were caught through the trees. Ellen Adair had sometimes thought the spot beautiful as a scene of fairy-land. It was little less so.

She was not working this morning. An open book lay before her on the rustic table. Her cheek was leaning on her raised hand, from which the wrist-lace fell back: a hand so suspiciously delicate as to betoken some lack of sound strength in its owner. She wore a white dress with a bow of pink ribbon at the throat and a pink waist-band. There were times, and this was one, when she looked extremely fragile.

A sound as of footsteps. Ellen only thought it was Mrs. Cumberland returning, and read on. But there was a different sound in *these* steps as they gained on her ear. Her heart stood still, and then bounded on again with a tumultuous rush, her pulses tingled, her sweet face turned red as the blushing rose. Sunshine had come.

"Good morning, Miss Adair."

In a cold, resentful, haughty tone was it spoken, and he did not attempt to shake hands. The sunshine seemed to go in again with a sweep. She shut her book and opened it, shut and opened it, her fingers fluttering. Captain Bohun put his hat on the seat.

"I thought Seeley might be here," said he, seeking out a pretty rose, and plucking it carefully.

"Seeley!" she exclaimed.

"Seeley. I beg your pardon: I did not know I spoke indistinctly.
SEELEY."

He stood and faced her: watching the varying colour of her face; the soft blushes going and coming. Somehow they increased his anger.

"May I ask if you have accepted him?"

"Ac—cepted him!" she stammered, in wild confusion. "Accepted! what?"

"The offer that Seeley made you last night."

"It was not last night," she replied in a confused impulse.

"Oh. Then it was this morning! May I congratulate you? Or not?"

Ellen Adair turned to her book in deep vexation. She had been caught, as it were; deluded into the tacit admission that Mr. Seeley had made the offer. And she was hurt at Arthur Bohun's words and tone: had he no better trust in her than *this*? As she turned the leaves of the book backwards and forwards in her agitation, as if seeking for some particular page, the plain gold ring on her finger, attracted his sight. He was chafing inwardly; but he strove to appear at the most careless ease, and sat down as far from her as the bench allowed. Which—seeing that it would only hold two stout people—could not be very far.

"I'd be honourable if I died for it," he remarked with indifference, sniffing at the rose. "Is it quite the thing for you to listen to another man while you wear that ring upon your finger?"

Ellen took it off and pushed it towards him along the table.

This frightened him: he turned as white as ashes. Until this, he had only been speaking in jealousy, not in belief. Her own face was becoming white, her lips were compressed to hide their trembling. And thus they sat for a minute or two, like the two simpletons they were. He looked at the ring, he looked at her.

"Do you mean it, Ellen?" he asked, in a voice that struggled with agitation, proving how very earnest he deemed the thing was becoming—whatever it might have begun in.

She made no answer.

"Do you wish to give me back this ring?"

"What you said was—I thought—equivalent to asking for it."

"It was not. You know better."

"Why are you quarrelling with me?"

Moving an inch nearer, he changed his tone to gentleness, bending his head forward to speak.

"Heaven knows that it is bitter enough to do so. Have I cause, Ellen?"

Her eyes were bent down; the colour stole into her face again; a half smile parted her lips.

"You know, Ellen, it is a perfectly monstrous thing that a common man like Seeley should dare to cast his aspiring thoughts to you."

"Was it my fault?" she returned. "He ought to have seen that—that—I should not like it."

"What did you tell him?"

"That it was quite impossible: that he was making a mistake altogether. When he was gone, I complained to Mrs. Cumberland."

"Insolent Jackanapes! Was he rude, Ellen?"

"Rude! Mr. Seeley!" she returned in surprise. "Quite the contrary. He has always been as considerate and respectful as a man can be. You look down on his position, Arthur, but he is as complete a gentleman in mind as you are."

"I only despise his position when he would seek to unite you to it."

"It has been very wrong of you to make me confess this. I can tell you *I* am feeling anything but 'honourable'—as you put it just now. There are things that should never be talked about; this is one. Nothing can be more unfair."

Very unfair. Captain Bohun's high-class feeling had come back to him, and he could but assent to it. He began to feel a little ashamed of himself: on more points than one.

"It shall never escape my lips, Ellen, while I breathe. Seeley's secret is safe, for me."

Taking up the ring, he held it for a moment, as if examining the gold. Ellen rose and went outside. The interview was becoming a very conscious one. He caught her up near the cascade, took her left hand in his, and slipped the ring upon her finger.

"How many times has it been off?" he asked.

"Never until to-day."

"Well—there it is again, Ellen. Cherish it still. I hope—I hope—that ere long——"

He did not finish: but she understood quite well what he meant. Their eyes met; and each read the impassioned love seated within the other; strangely pure withal, and idealistic as ever poet painted. He strained the hand in his.

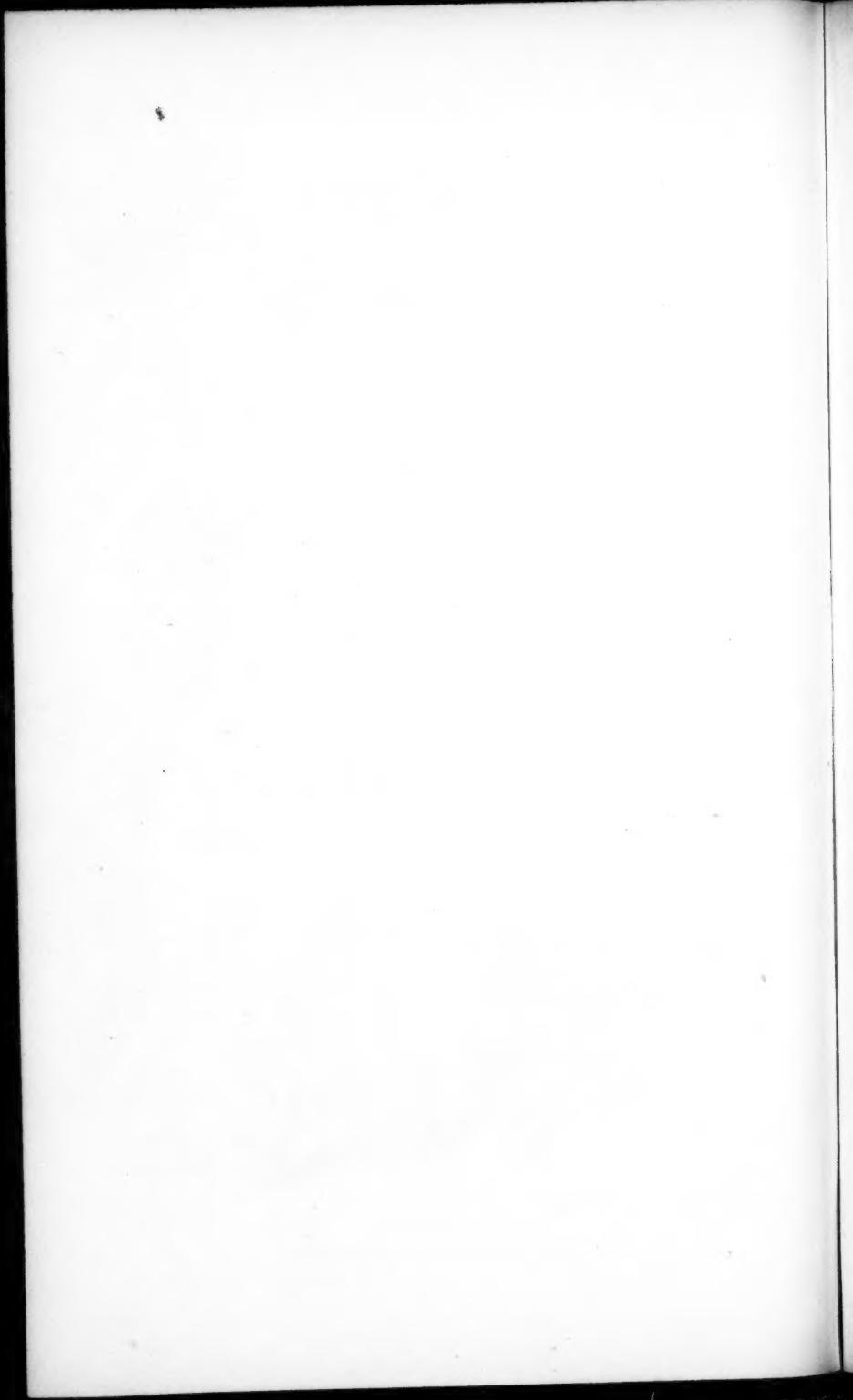
"Forgive my petulance, my darling."

Save for the one sweet word and the lingering pressure of the hand, save that the variegated rose was transferred from his possession to hers, the interview had been wholly uncharacterized by the fond signs and tokens that are commonly supposed to attend the intercourse of lovers. Captain Bohun had hitherto abstained from using such—and perhaps heaven alone knew what the self-denial cost. In his ultra-refined nature he may have deemed such would be unjustifiable, until he could speak out openly and say Will you be my wife?

"What is your book, Ellen?" he asked, as she returned to take it from the table.



"How many times has it been off, Ellen?"



"Longfellow."

"Longfellow! Shall I read it to you? can you stay out?"

"I can stay until one o'clock: luncheon time."

They sat down and he began: "The Courtship of Miles Standish." The blue sky shone down upon them through the flickering leaves, the cascade trickled, the bees hummed in the warm air, the white butterflies sported with the buds and flowers: and Ellen Adair, her hands clasping that treasure they held, the variegated rose, her eyes falling on it to hide their happiness, listened in rapt attention, for the voice was sweeter to her than any heard out of heaven.

The words of the poet—not Longfellow, as we all know—most surely were applicable to this period of the existence of Captain Bohun and Ellen Adair. One of them at least would acknowledge it amidst the bitterness of after life.

"Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands,
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands."

It could not last—speaking now only of the hour. One o'clock came all too soon; when he had seemingly read but ten minutes; and Miles Standish had to be left in the most unsatisfactory state. Ellen rose: she must hasten in.

"It is a pity to leave it at this," said Arthur. "Shall I come and finish it in the afternoon?"

Ellen shook her head. In the afternoon she would have to drive out with Mrs. Cumberland.

Captain Bohun went home through the green lanes, and soon found himself amidst those other flowers—Mr. North's. That gentleman came forth from his parlour to meet him, apparently in some tribulation, a letter in his hand.

"Oh, Arthur, I don't know what to say to you; I am so sorry," he exclaimed. "Look here. When the postman came this morning, I happened to be out, and he gave me my two letters, as I thought, and as he must have thought, going on to the hall door with the rest. I put them in my pocket, and forgot them, Arthur: my spectacles were indoors. When I remembered them only just now, I found one was directed to you in Sir Nash's hand. I am so sorry," repeated poor Mr. North in his most helpless manner.

"Don't be that, sir," replied Arthur cheerily. "It's nothing; not of the least consequence at all," he added opening the letter. But nevertheless, as his eyes fell on the contents, a rather startled expression took his face.

"There!" cried Mr. North, looking inclined to cry. "Something's wrong, and the delay has done mischief."

"Indeed nothing's wrong—in the sense you are thinking," repeated

Arthur—for he would not have added to the poor old man's troubles for the world. "My uncle says James is not so well as he could wish: he wants me to go up at once and stay with them. "You can read it for yourself, sir."

Mr. North put on his glasses. "I see, Arthur. You might have gone the first thing this morning, but for my keeping the letter. It was very stupid of the postman to give it me."

Arthur laughed. "Indeed I should have made no such hurry. There's not the least necessity for that. I think I shall go up this afternoon, though."

"Yes do, Arthur. And explain to Sir Nash that it was my fault. Tell him that I am growing forgetful and useless. Fit only to be cut down, Arthur; to be cut down."

Arthur Bohun put the old man's arm affectionately within his, and took him back to his parlour. If Mr. North had grown old it was with worry, not with years: the worry dealt out to him daily by Madam; and Arthur would have remedied it with his best blood, had he known how.

"You had better go up with me, sir; for a little change. Sir Nash would be so glad to see you."

"I go up with you! I couldn't, Arthur; I am not equal to it now. And the strike is on, you know, and my place ought to be here while it lasts. The men look upon me still as their master, though Dick—Dick acts. And there's another thing, Arthur—I couldn't leave my roses just as they have come into bloom."

Arthur Bohun smiled: the last reason was all cogent. Mr. North stayed behind, and he went up that same afternoon to London.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TONTINE.

THE tontine. If the reader only knew how important a share the tontine—with its results—holds in this little history, he would enter on it with interest.

Tontines may be of different arrangement. In fact, they are so. This one was as follows. It had been instituted at Whitborough. Ten gentlemen put each an equal sum into a common fund, and invested the whole in the joint names of ten children, all under a year old. This money was to be allowed to accumulate at compound interest, until only one of those children should be left alive: that one, the last survivor, would then receive the whole of the money unconditionally.

Of these ten children whose names were inscribed on the parchment deed, Oliver Rane and Bessy North alone survived. Mr. North had been wont to call it an unlucky tontine, for its members had died off

rapidly one after another. For several years only three had been left ; and now one of them, George Massey, had followed in the wake of those that were gone. Under ordinary circumstances, the tontine would have excited no comment whatever, but have gone on smoothly to the end : that is, until one of the two survivors had collapsed. The other one would have had the money paid him ; and nothing been thought about it, except that he was a fortunate man.

But this case was exceptional. The two survivors were man and wife. For the good fortune to lapse to one of them, the other must die. It was certainly a curious position, and it excited a good deal of comment in the neighbourhood. Dallory, as prone to gossip as other places, made it into that oft-quoted thing, a nine-days' wonder. In the general stagnation caused by the strike, people took up the tontine as a source of relief.

Practically the tontine was of no further use to the two remaining members ; that is, to the two combined. They were one, so to say : and so long as they continued to be such, the money could not lapse. If Bessy died, Dr. Rane would take it ; if Dr. Rane died, she would take it. Nothing more could be made of it than this. It had been accumulating now just thirty years : how much longer it would be left to accumulate, none could foresee. For thirty years to come, in all human probability : for Dr. Rane and his wife appeared to possess, each, a sound and healthy constitution. Nay, they might survive ten or twenty years beyond that, and yet not be very aged. And so, there it was ; and Dallory made the matter its own, with unceremonious freedom.

But not as Dr. and Mrs. Rane did. They had need of money, and this huge sum (huge to them) lying at the very threshold of their door, but forbidden to enter, was more tantalizing than pen can tell. Richard North had not been wrong in his computation : and the amount as it stood at present, was rather considerably over two thousand pounds. The round sum, however, was large enough to reckon by without counting odds and ends. Two thousand pounds ! Two thousand pounds theirs of right, and yet they might not touch it because one of them was not dead !

How many hours they spent, discussing the matter with each other, could never be computed. As soon as the twilight of the evening came on, wherever they might be and whatever the occupation, the theme was sure to be drifted into. In the dining-room when it grew too dusk for Dr. Rane to pursue his writing ; in the drawing-room, into which Bessy would wile him, and sing to him one of her simple songs ; walking together, arm within arm, in the garden paths, the stars in the summer sky above them, the waving trees encompassing them round about, the subject of the tontine would be taken up : the tontine ; nothing but the tontine. It was no wonder that they grew to form plans of what they would do if the money were theirs : we all know

how apt we are to let imagination run away with us, and to indulge visions that grow to seem like reality. Dr. Rane painted a bright future. With two thousand pounds in hand, he could establish himself in a first-class metropolitan locality, set up well, both professionally and socially ; and there would be plenty of money for him and his wife to live upon while the practice was growing. Bessy entered into it all as eagerly as he. Having become accustomed to the idea of quitting Dallory, she never glanced back at the possibility of remaining. *She* thought his eager wish, his unalterable determination to leave it, was connected only with the interests of his profession ; *he* knew that the dread of a certain possible discovery, ever haunting his conscience, made the place more intolerable to him day by day. At any cost he must get away from it ; at any cost. There was a great happiness in these evening conversations, in the glowing hope presented by plans and projects. But where was the use of indulging such, when the tontine money (the pivot on which all was to turn) could never be theirs ? As often as this damping recollection brought them up with a check, Dr. Rane would fall into a gloomy silence. Gradually, by the very force of thinking, he saw a way, or thought he saw a way, by which their hopes might be accomplished. And that was, to induce the trustees to advance the money at once to him and his wife jointly.

Meanwhile the strike continued in unabated force. Not a man was at work ; every one refused to do a stroke unless he could be paid for it what *he* thought right, and left off his daily labour when he chose. One might have supposed, by the independence of the demands, that the men were the masters and North and Gass the servants. Privation was beginning to reign, garments grew scanty, faces pinched. There was not so much as a sixpence for superfluities : and under that head in troubled times must be classed the attendance of a medical man. It will readily be understood, therefore, that this state of affairs did not contribute to fill the pockets of Dr. Rane.

One day, Mr. North, sitting on the short green bench in front of his choicest carnation bed, found two loving hands put round his neck from behind. He had been three parts asleep, and woke up slightly bewildered.

"Bessy, child ! Is it you ?"

It was Mrs. Rane. Her footfall on the grass had not been heard. She wore a cool print dress and black silk mantle ; and her plain straw bonnet sat well on, around the pretty falling curls. Bessy looked quiet and simple always : and always a lady.

"Did I startle you, papa ?"

"No, my dear. When I felt the arms, I thought it was Mary Dallory. She comes upon me without warning sometimes. Here's room, Bessy."

Making way for her, she sat down beside him. It was a very hot

morning, and Bessy untied the strings of her bonnet. There was a slight look of weariness on her face, as if she were just a little worried with home cares. In truth she felt so : but all for Oliver's sake. If the money came not in so freely as to make matters easy, she did not mind it for herself, but for him.

"Papa, I have come to talk to you," she began, laying one of her hands on his knee affectionately. "It is about the tontine money. Oliver thinks that it might be paid to us conjointly ; that it ought to be."

"I know he does," replied Mr. North. "It can't be done, Bessy."

Her countenance fell a little. "Do you think not, papa ?"

"I am sure not, child."

"Papa, I am here this morning to beg of you to use your interest with Sir Thomas Ticknell for us. Oliver knows nothing of my coming. He said last night, when we were talking, that if you could be induced to throw your interest into our scale, the bank might listen to you. So I thought to myself that I would come to you in the morning and ask."

"The bank won't listen to me, or to anybody else in this matter, Bessy. It's against the law to pay the tontine over while two of you are alive, and the Ticknells are too strict to risk it. I shouldn't do it myself in their places."

"What Oliver says is this, papa. The money must, in the due course of events, come to either him or me, whichever of us shall survive the other. We have therefore an equal interest in it, and possess at present an equal chance of succeeding to it. No one else in the wide world, but our two selves, has the smallest claim to it, or ever can have. We are the only survivors of the ten ; the rest are all dead. Why, then, should the trustees not stretch a point, and let us have the money while it can be of use to us conjointly ? Oliver says they ought to do it."

"I know he does," remarked Mr. North.

"Has Oliver spoken to you, papa ?"

"No," said Mr. North, "I heard about it from Dick. Dick happened to be at the bank yesterday, and Thomas Ticknell mentioned to him that Dr. Rane had been urging this request upon them. Dick said Sir Thomas seemed quite horrified at the proposition ; they had told Dr. Rane in answer that if they could consent to such a thing it would be no better than a fraud."

"So they did," replied Bessy. "When Oliver was telling me after he came home, he could not help laughing—in spite of his vexation. The money is virtually ours, so where would the fraud lie ?"

"To be virtually yours is one thing, Bessy ; to be legally yours is another. You young women can't be expected to understand business questions, my dear ; but your husband does. Of course it would be a great boon to get the two thousand pounds while you are both toge-

ther ; but it would not be a legal thing for the bankers to do, and they are right in refusing it."

"Then—do you think there is no chance for us, papa?"

"Not a bit of it, child."

A silence ensued. Mr. North sat watching his carnations, Bessy watching, with a far-off gaze, the dark-blue summer sky, as if the difficulty might be solved there. In spite of her father's opinion, she thought the brothers, Thomas and William Ticknell, unduly hard.

The Ticknells were the chief bankers of Whitborough. Upon the institution of the tontine, the two brothers, then in their early prime, had been made trustees to it, in conjunction with a gentleman named Wilson. In the course of time, Mr. Wilson died : and Mr. Thomas and Mr. William Ticknell grew into tolerably aged men : they wanted now not much of the allotted span, three score years and ten. The elder brother had gone up to court with some great local matter, and came back Sir Thomas. These two gentlemen had full power over the funds of the tontine. They were straightforward, honourable men ; of dispositions naturally cautious ; and holding very strict opinions in business. Increasing years had not tended to lessen the caution, or to soften the strict tenets : and when Dr. Rane, soliciting a private interview with the brothers, presented himself before them with a proposition that they should pay over the tontine funds to him and his wife conjointly, without waiting for the death of either, the few hairs remaining on the old gentlemen's white heads, rose up on end.

Truly it had seemed to them, this singular application, as touching closely upon fraud. Dr. Rane argued the matter with them, putting it in the most feasible and favourable light: and it must be acknowledged that to his mind, it appeared a thing, not only that they might do, but that it would be in them perfectly right and honest to do. All in vain ; they heard him with courtesy, but were harder than adamant. Richard North happened to go in upon some business soon after the conclusion of the interview, and the brothers—they were the bankers to North and Gass—told him confidentially of the application. Richard imparted it to his father : hence Mr. North heard Bessy without surprise.

Regarded in the narrow, legal view, of course the Messrs. Ticknell might be right ; but, taking it broadly and comprehensively, there could be no doubt that it seemed hard upon Oliver Rane and his wife. The chief question that had presented itself to Richard North's mind, was, if the money were handed over now, would the Messrs. Ticknell be quite secure from ulterior consequences ? They said *not*. Upon Richard North's suggesting that a lawyer might be consulted upon the point, Sir Thomas Ticknell answered that, no matter what a lawyer might say, they should never incur the responsibility of parting with the tontine money so long as two of its members were living. And I think they must be right, Richard remarked afterwards to his father.

Turning to Bessy, sitting by him on the bench, Mr. North repeated this. Bessy listened in dutiful silence, but shook her head.

"Papa, much as I respect Richard's judgment, clever as I know him to be, I am sure he is wrong here. It is very strange that he should go against me and Oliver."

"It is because of his good judgment, my dear," replied Mr. North simply. "I'd trust it against the world, on account of his impartiality. When he has to decide between two opposite opinions, he invariably puts himself, or tries to put himself, in either place, weighs each side, and comes to a conclusion unbiased. Look at this strike, now on : Dick has been reproached with leaning to the men's side, with holding familiar argument with them, for and against ; a thing that few masters would do : but it is because he sees they really believe they have right on their side, and he would treat their opinions with respect, however mistaken he may know them to be."

"Richard cannot think the men are not to blame !" exclaimed Mrs. Rane.

"He lays the blame chiefly where, as *he* says, it is due—on the Trade Union. The men were deluded into listening to it at first ; and they can't help obeying its dictates now : they have given themselves over to it, body and soul, Bessy, and can no more escape than a prisoner from a dungeon. That's Richard's view, mind ; and it makes him all leniency : I'd try and bring 'em to their senses in a different way, if I had the power and the means left me."

"In what way, papa?"

"Bessy, if I were what I once was—a wealthy man, independent of business—I'd close the works for good : break 'em up : burn 'em if need be : anything but re-open them. The trade should go where it would, and the men after it ; or stop here and starve, just as they chose. It's not I that would have my peace of life worried out of me by these strikes ; or let men, that I've employed and done liberally by always, dictate to me. You've heard of the old saying—cutting off the nose to spite the face : that's just what the men will find they have done. They'll find it, Bessy, to their cost, as sure as that we two are sitting here."

Mr. North laid hold of the hoe that was resting on the elbow of the bench, and struck it lightly on the ground. Meaning no doubt to give emphasis to his words. Bessy Rane passed from the subject of the strike to that which more immediately concerned her.

"Richard is honest, papa ; he would never say what he did not think ; but he may be mistaken sometimes. I *cannot* understand how he can think the Ticknells right in refusing to let us have the money. If there were the slightest, smallest, reason for their keeping it back, it would be different : but there's none."

"Look here, Bessy. If they go by the strict letter of the law, they

cannot do it. The tontine deed was drawn up as tightly as any thing can be : it expressly says that nine of the members must be dead, and only the tenth remaining, before the money can be withdrawn from where it is invested. The Ticknells can't get over this."

"Papa—forgive me—you should not say can't, but won't," spoke Mrs. Rane. "They can do it if they please ; there's nothing to prevent it. All power, to act, lies with them ; they are responsible to none : if they paid over the money to Oliver to-morrow, not an individual in the whole world, from the Queen upon her throne to the youngest clerk in their counting-house, could call them to account for it. The strictest judge on the bench might not say to them afterwards, You have paid away money that you had no right to pay."

"Stop a bit, Bessy—that's just where the weak point lies. The Ticknells say that if they parted with the money now, they might be called upon for it again at some future time."

Bessy sat in amazement. "Why ! How could that be ?"

Mr. North raised his straw hat and rubbed his head before he replied. It was a somewhat puzzling question.

"Dick put it somehow in this way, my dear : that is, Thomas Ticknell put it to him. If you should die, Bessy, leaving your husband a widower with children (or, for the matter of that, if he should die, leaving you with some) the children might come upon the Ticknells for the money over again. Or Rane might come upon them, if he were the one left ; or you, if you were. It was in that way, I think Dick said, but my memory is not as clear as it used to be."

"As if we should be so dishonourable ! Besides—there could be no possibility of claiming the money twice. Having received it once, the Ticknells would hold our receipt for it."

Mr. North shook his head. "The law is full of quips and turns, Bessy. If the trustees paid over this money to you and your husband now, against the provisions of the tontine deed, I suppose it is at least a nice question whether the survivor of you could not compel them to pay it again."

Bessy held her breath. "Do *you* think they could be compelled, papa?"

"Well, I don't know, Bessy. I fancy perhaps they might be. Dick says they are right, as prudent men, to refuse. One thing you and Oliver may rest assured of, my dear—that, under the doubt, the Ticknells will never be got to do it as long as oak and ash grow."

Bessy Rane sighed, and began to tie her bonnet. She had no idea that the paying of the money would involve the trustees in any liability, real or fancied, and hope went out of her from this moment. By nature she was as just as Richard ; and she could not henceforth even wish that the Ticknells should incur the risk.

"Dick's indoors, my dear, if you'd like to ask him what Sir Thomas

said ; he would explain it to you better than I have. No haste now, to go off in a morning : there's no works open to go to."

"I have heard enough, papa ; I quite understand it now," was Mrs. Rane's answer. "It will be a dreadful disappointment to Oliver when he hears that no chance, or hope, is left. It would have been—oh such a help to us."

"He is not getting on very well, is he, Bessy ?"

"No. Especially since the strike set in. The men can't pay."

"Seeley must feel it as well as Oliver."

"Not half as much ; not a quarter. His practice chiefly lies amid the richer classes. Well, we must have patience. As Oliver says, Fortune does not seem to smile upon us just now."

"If I could put a hundred-pound note, or so, into your hand, while these bad times are being tided over, I'd do it, Bessy girl. But I can't. Tell Oliver so. The strike is bringing us no end of embarrassment, and I don't know where it will end. It was bad enough before, as you remember, Bessy ; but we had always Richard as a refuge."

"Richard will take care of you still, papa ; don't be troubled ; in some way or other, I am sure he will. As to ourselves, we are young, and can wait for the good time coming."

Very cheerily she spoke. And perhaps felt so. Bessy's gentle nature held a great deal of sunshine.

"I wonder Oliver's mother does not help him," remarked Mr. North.

"Her will would be good to do it, papa, but she lives up to every farthing of her income : beyond it, I fancy sometimes. She has luxuries around her, and her travelling about costs a good deal. She is not one to cut and contrive, or to put up with small lodgings on her different sojourns. Sometimes, as you know, she travels post : it is easier, she says ; and that is very expensive."

"You'll come indoors a bit, won't you, Bessy," said Mr. North as she rose. "Miss Field and Matilda were sitting in the hall just now, for coolness."

She hesitated for a moment, and then walked on by his side. Mrs. Rane's visits to the Hall were rare. Madam had not been cordial with her since her marriage ; and she had never once condescended to enter Bessy's home.

The hall was empty. Bessy was about to enter the drawing-room in search of her half-sister, when the door opened to give Madam egress. The two touched each other. Madam stared haughtily, stepped back, and shut the door in Bessy's face. Next moment, a hand was extended over Bessy's shoulder, and threw it wide.

"By your leave, Madam," said Richard North calmly. "Room for my sister."

He marshalled her in as though she had been a duchess. Madam, drawing her lace shawl around her shoulders, swept majestically out,

vouchsafing neither word nor look. It was nothing more than the contempt often dealt to Bessy : but Richard's blood went up in a boil.

That the refusal of the trustees to part with the funds of the tontine was irrevocable, there could be no doubt : nevertheless, Oliver Rane declined to see it. The matter got wind, as nearly everything else seemed to do in Dallory, and many of the public took his part. It was a frightful shame, they thought, that a man and his wife could not be let enjoy together the money that was their due, but must wait for one or the other's death before they got it. Jelly's tongue made itself particularly busy. Dr. Rane was not a favourite of hers on the whole, but she espoused his cause warmly in this.

"It's such a temptation," remarked Jelly to a select few, one night at Ketlar's, whither she had betaken herself to blow up the man for continuing to hold out on strike, to which movement Jelly was a determined foe.

"A temptation?" rejoined Tim Wilks respectfully, who made one of her audience. "In what way, Miss Jelly?"

"In what way," retorted Jelly with some scorn. "Why in the way of *stealing* the money, if it is to be got at ; or of punching those two old bankers' heads. When a man's kept out of his own through nothing but some naggering crochet, it's enough to make him feel desperate, Tim Wilks."

"So it is, miss," acquiesced meek Timothy.

"If my mistress withheld my wages from me—which it's twenty pounds a year, and her left-off silks—I should fight at it, I know : perhaps take 'em. And *this* is two thousand pounds."

"Two thousand pounds!" ejaculated honest Ketlar in a low tone of reverence, as he lifted his hands. "And for the doctor to be kept of it because his out wife's not dead ! It *is* a shame."

"I'd not say, either, but it might bring another sort of temptation to some men, besides those mentioned by Miss Jelly," put in Timothy Wilks with hesitation.

"And pray what would that be?" demanded Jelly in a tart voice—for she made it a point to keep Timothy under before company.

"The putting of his wife out of the way on purpose to get the money, Miss Jelly," spoke Tim with deprecation.

"You—you don't mean the murdering of her!" shrieked Mrs. Ketlar, who was a timid woman and apt to be startled.

"Yes I did," replied Timothy Wilks. "Some might be found to do it. No offence to Dr. Rane. I'm putting the supposititious case of a bad man ; not of him."

(*To be continued.*)

THOUGHTS ON FEMALE EDUCATION.

THERE are few prejudices more ill-founded than the prejudices entertained by some men against women being taught Greek and Latin, simply because they think it an innovation. In past centuries, it was neither an uncommon thing for women to be classical scholars, nor was their being so regarded by men as anything unfeminine. The nuns in the middle ages often made light the heavy hours of convent life by writing holy meditations in Latin, and their confessors never seem to have thought this a sin worthy of penance. Many a pretty mouth in England, in the time of Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, could trip through an ode of Pindar, as easily as it could warble a love song. Lady Jane Grey, the tender harmony of whose brief life, and the gentle dignity of whose early death are more truly womanly than perhaps anything else in Woman's history, preferred to sit in her room reading Greek, than to ride through the greenwood with the merry music of horn and hound, or to glide through the dance. Margaret Roper, the most devoted of daughters, could have floored in a classical explanation many a pompous old don, who laughs now at female scholarship. To go abroad, Margaret of Valois, the most daintily finished of coquettes, could discourse in Latin quite as gracefully as she could prattle about a new head-dress. Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, who, as a wife and mother, might have been placed on an altar by the most fastidious husband, could construe Virgil as prettily as she could toss her baby. Why then, if these women could be modest and attractive, and domestic beyond what most of their sex are at this day, and yet possess classical knowledge, why should some men of the nineteenth century think of the acquirement of such knowledge by their daughters or sisters, or female friends, as a dangerous experiment which will, perhaps, turn society upside down. There are few things more painful to a thoughtful woman at the present day, than to listen to the style of conversation with which girls, often with bright intelligent faces, regale each other or their neighbours at the dinner table, or their partners at a ball. It savours by turns, of the milliner, of the love verses in an almanack, and the stable boy. Men who have scarce a grain of sense in their heads complain of this, and say that it is because girls spend all their time in reading novels, some drenched in sickly sentiment, and some glittering with the tinsel of flashy fastness, which other women have written. To this, we in some measure, agree. But if these complaining gentlemen set up their backs, even while they complain, at the name of high female education, all we

can say to them is, that both novel readers and novel writers must remain the same if nothing is done to improve either. Girls who were brought up on the best intellectual food, would not be satisfied with any sort of washy unwholesome stuff which might be set before them. In the novel reading world there would be a demand for a better article, and the ladies who supplied it would have to work up to this higher standard.

With regard to novel writing itself, we would say a few words to all clever girls whose aspirations turn in that direction. If a young lady took it into her head to be her own mantua-maker, she would certainly never think of cutting out a dress till she had had a good deal of practice. Nor would she, if she had a taste for drawing, try to make a finished sketch till she had had lessons in perspective. Nor would she, if she were a musician, attempt a difficult Italian song, without having worked before hand at scales and exercises. And yet she will sit down to write a novel, or a tale for a magazine, without the slightest previous training, without even having made trial, to show whether she has, at least a taste for that sort of work. She forgets that the writing of fiction is, on the whole, the most difficult and serious of arts, since it is the art of reading men's hearts, of playing on men's passions and sympathies, and of painting men's characters. The first thing to be done by a young woman who wishes to become a novelist is, to assure herself, by showing what she has written to some competent and truthful judge that she has a real talent that way. The next two essentials are, that she should consider her art as the highest and noblest in the world, and that she should resolve earnestly and thoughtfully to make it her first object in life. She must read and think over the best authors, at least of modern, if not of ancient times. She must really study the men and women around her. She must work hard and not shrink back from a struggle. She must remember that pert flippancy and vulgar slang, and a low tone of morality, are just as much out of place in a novel (and more especially in a novel written by a lady) as in the pulpit; yet, still, she must also recollect, that neither art nor religion will be the better for dragging the pulpit into the novel. If only those women who loved their art well enough to do all this for it, and to feel all this about it, were to become writers of fiction, our common run of novels would be very different from what they are.

Another complaint made by young single men of the present day, of women, is, that they cannot go into a room full of girls without being regularly hunted down as husbands. There is much truth in this, though, perhaps, the good opinion which these heroes of the drawing-room have of themselves may somewhat exaggerate their danger. We lay the whole blame of the matter here on the false notions with which young ladies in the higher classes are brought up. Many mothers educate their daughters to believe that the only end and aim of their lives is to get married advantageously. Instead of this, we ought to bring up our

girls to stand alone, if necessary, in the world, and to give them resources which will enable them to do so readily and usefully. We should teach them to mix with men in an easy, natural, friendly way, and never put into their heads the idea (which is so fatal to all pleasant intercourse between the sexes) that every man who comes near them must be a lover or a husband. We should show them what good and beautiful work there is for women of fine tact and strong energy to do among the people. How, in our large towns, they may seek out their fallen sisters and lead them back to the right path. How they may call around them the plough-boy, the miner, and the navvy (all of whom will listen to no voice so soon as the voice of a well-bred lady) and put before them the simple truth in a simple hearty way. How the door of the school is always open, where the single woman may go in and teach little hands to fold themselves in prayer, and little voices to prattle words of endearment at her knee. Above all, let us strive to give our girls generality of interests, and catholicity of sympathy, and breadth of opinion.

Narrowness is the bane of many a charming female character; more especially is this the case in religious matters. Nothing is more painful and unpleasant than to hear (as in these days too often we do hear) young ladies loudly dogmatizing on religious subjects. Girls little know how much harm they do by this sort of talk to their brothers and cousins, who, through the incessant theological din which goes on in their ears at home, become literally frightened away from sacred things. On the other hand, nothing seems to us nearer to the angels than wide Christian charity in the heart and on the lips of a woman. It is wonderful how men, even of evil life, become softened and purified in the presence of such a woman. It is wonderful what her gentle silent example will do among those she lives with. Let us, then, teach our girls to *act* religiously rather than to *talk* religiously. Let us instil into them that they are not to go about the world *proclaiming* the tenets in which they were brought up, but *doing* what is practical in them.

This catholicity of feeling of which we have been speaking is, in our opinion, the part of the male character which we want to graft into the minds of the rising female generation. The best way to do this will be to let men take part in the tuition of girls. The ladies' lectures, which are now becoming common in the metropolis and elsewhere, are a good step in this direction. To us, it seems, that there can be no greater folly than to forbid girls the reading of good fiction, good plays, and good poetry. The lively young female imagination cries out for good food like all the rest of the intellectual powers. If this is not given, it naturally grows sickly. The girl then either sinks into a mere machine-like being, without a spark of wit or fancy, or else her imagination forms for itself an unhealthy dream of romance, in which her dancing or riding master will very probably be the hero. If the result is an elopement, we must say that it serves the parents or schoolmistress right.

We began this paper by speaking of women being taught Greek and Latin. We do not, however, mean to say that we think these indispensable in the education of girls. There are some classes of female minds to whom the tone of feeling in the ancient writers is so entirely unsympathetic that they can never read them with pleasure or profit. Besides, some girls acquire languages with much greater difficulty than others. We must be content with making these at home in the classics of their own country, which after all are quite as glorious and brilliant a domain as those of the ancients; and with teaching them a little of one or two modern languages. Untold are the time and money wasted at fashionable schools in trying to make girls learn things for which they have no taste. Sometimes it is an unfortunate Signor who gets a guinea an hour (money in truth hardly earned considering the martyrdom he goes through) for drumming music into a pretty little head, in the dainty ears of which there lurks not one echo of harmony. Sometimes it is a luckless artist, who wearies his soul with striving to coax fingers (which may be very taper, but are certainly very stubborn) into drawing a graceful curve instead of an acute angle. If our girls have no talent for these accomplishments, let us not try to cram them with them. Let us rather encourage them to apply themselves to more solid things, for which, in this case, they will probably have a liking, such as science and mathematics. We know that some people say that women have never done, and will never do, anything in these deeper studies. A thing never having happened does not, however, prove that it cannot happen. We fully believe, that if the talents of those girls whose minds turn in this direction were fostered and developed, they would gain an honourable place. The wide canvas of history should be often unrolled before our girls. They should be made to see how small the interests of the individual seem in comparison with the vast interests there at stake. Thus, when in after life small vexations throng around them, the thoughts early put into their minds in their historical readings will keep them from complaining about trifles, which is a feminine habit that peculiarly irritates most men. They may, also, in the study of history, be made to learn courage and firmness from the examples of great women in past centuries.

We spoke just now of bringing up our girls to stand *alone*; but even more than for her whose fate is a single life, is a high class of education necessary for her who is to become a wife and a mother. The men of the twentieth century are literally in the hands of us who are bringing up the girls of the nineteenth. No sovereignty can be so complete as that of the mother over her boy, till he reaches a certain age. Her way of thinking, her way of speaking, her way of acting, form the standard to which he brings everything in himself and in the world around him. He sees with her eyes, and hears with her ears; his very heart beats in unison with hers. When he goes out into the world, this power is of

course weakened, nay, sometimes, in the hour of passion or of pleasure, it almost, for a while, dies out. But sooner or later that old influence will re-awaken within him, and the, perhaps dead mother, will, through memory, again reign in the heart and mind of her son. Thus it comes to pass, that his mother colours, in general, more or less, a man's whole life. This is why almost all great men have had great mothers. This is why the unfolding of not one single blossom, "in the rose-bud garden of girls," can be looked on as a matter of slight import to the world.

Again, what is so much the shaper of a man's story as the mind of his wife. If she is ambitious for him, he is ambitious for himself. If out of a selfish wish to keep him at her side she lulls him into idleness, he becomes a useless member of society. If she is an agreeable companion, he stays at home. If she is frivolous and can talk about nothing but lace and ribbons, he goes to his club. She strikes the moral and religious key-note of the whole family. We may then judge whether it is necessary to give our girls breadth and firmness of character, and to make them something more than pretty pieces of furniture in their husband's house.

With regard to the ideas concerning marriage, which we should instil into our girls, they appear to us very simple, though the chaperones of a London season seem to be trying to make them very complicated. We should teach them that love is the only lawful forger of the matrimonial chain. We should tell them that money, and station, and convenience often come forward to perform that office, but that they are only mortal pretenders to the rights of an immortal. We know that this style of teaching will not be by any means approved of by a certain class of fashionable mammas. But we cannot help that. We have seen so much misery in the world around us, arising from ill-assorted marriages, that we should wish to write this part of our doctrine into the hearts of our girls with a pen of adamant. We like to see girls brought up with quite as high feelings about honour as boys. We cannot bear to hear it said that a lady's promise may be broken, or that a lady may tell an untruth with impunity. We cannot fancy a greater insult to the moral worth of woman than this, and we would earnestly beg all mothers and schoolmistresses to keep such words from the ears of their daughters and pupils. This, and the breadth of feeling and thought we have dwelt upon above, are the two parts of boys' education, which, at present, it seems to us most necessary to borrow for the education of girls. A very bright day is certainly dawning upon the intellectual part of woman. We do not wish—like our American contemporaries, who walk about in coat and waistcoat—to see women unsexed. They are different from men, though their equals. But we do wish to see it made easy to Woman to perform always creditably, often brilliantly, her share in the work of the world.

ALICE KING.

THE DREAM OF GERTRUDE LISLE.

An Old Story Reprinted.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

SOME years ago, when Bath occupied a much more important place in the estimation of the fashionable world than it does now, and when few, save the aristocracy, or, as the advertisements express it, the "nobility and gentry," ventured on a six weeks' sojourn there, those frequenting the city may remember in one of its visitors a fine portly dame of the name of Howard, who was one of the gayest in that gay place. If the reader can so far carry back his memory, he will have little difficulty in bringing her to his mind, for she was to be observed everywhere : in the rooms and at the theatre, in the promenade and at evening soirées—a pleasant, gossiping, feather-decked, satin-wearing woman ; vastly partial to her three daughters, and strongly suspected to be on the look-out for means by which they might be taken off her hands ; for they were expensive girls, and the marriage of one or two of them would not have been an unwelcome event. Mrs. Howard was of very good family, and her jointure was large, but an extravagant rate of living wholly absorbed it ; so there was little fortune for her daughters. People persisted in making offers to Caroline—Caroline the beautiful, as she was sometimes called—the only one to whom they were of no avail. *She* was appropriated, in intention at least, to her rich East Indian cousin, who was now superintending the decorations of his newly-purchased seat, preparatory to welcoming her there as his bride. He was forty years her senior, and she neither loved him nor disliked him ; she was willing enough to marry him, and when asked by her acquaintance what she thought of him, answered that he was a pleasant old man.

Well, reader, if you remember Mrs. Howard, do you also recollect, the last winter that she visited Bath, a young man named Lisle making his appearance there ? Handsome, very gentlemanly, apparently rich, Mr. Lisle was set down as *somebody*, and praised and courted. His horses were the handsomest, his gloves the whitest, his bachelor equipage the newest in all Bath. He was silent as to his family, but others talked for him—he was a nobleman in disguise or a prince incog. He had therefore speedily, without effort on his own part, the entrée to many of

the best circles, and amongst others to the house of Mrs. Howard. Well-read and accomplished, he was a frequent and welcome visitor, and week after week passed on, till gossips began to whisper that he sought a wife there. This gentleman was seen but that one winter—he came and he went; and nobody knew who he was or what he was: but if you will listen to me I will tell you about him, and give you a line or two—it will be little more—of his subsequent history.

"Caroline," began Mrs. Howard, as she seated herself at the breakfast-table by the side of her daughter, "I was *incensed* last night at that dispute in the rooms about you. Lord Maybury was evidently in the right, yet you chose to decide in favour of Mr. Lisle, and in such a manner as to draw the eyes of the whole room upon you."

"Caroline makes herself very absurd," observed Miss Margaret Howard, petulantly pushing, instead of handing, her sister's tea to her, thereby spilling some of it on the cloth.

"To be sure she does," was the reply of Mrs. Howard. "Caroline is engaged—will soon be a wife; and yet she manages to attract the whole notice of Mr. Lisle, as much so as if she were on the point of marrying him. We know not who Mr. Lisle is; neither can I enquire while his attentions are engrossed by Caroline: were one of you their object I should make a point of doing so. Pray, Caroline, how do you suppose Sir Mark Howard would approve of this great intimacy?"

"I am not married to Sir Mark yet," pouted the blushing girl, whose extreme beauty had caused her to be spoilt and humoured by her mother.

"But you will be. Were Mr. Lisle dying for you, and ten times as rich as Sir Mark, it would be of no avail; for to Sir Mark you are promised, and Sir Mark you must marry: and this I shall hint in a very plain manner to Mr. Lisle to-day."

Caroline did not answer. Indifferent to Sir Mark as she formerly was—indifferent she remained; but, alas! the true earnest love of her young heart was now given to Mr. Lisle.

"My mother is in such a fume and a fret!" exclaimed Eliza Howard, darting into the room, some weeks subsequent to the above conversation. "I don't believe she'll ever be right again."

"What is the matter?" demanded Margaret and Caroline.

"About Mr. Lisle. It's quite horrible."

"What has happened to him?" gasped Caroline, rising from her seat as if electrified.

"Happened to *him*, indeed! I've no patience with it! And to bring it out so coolly to mamma, saying he thought she knew it from the first; and that Caroline did, if she did not."

Caroline sank on her chair again, and covered her face with her hands.

"What has he done?" inquired Margaret.

"A fellow to come and palm himself off for a gentleman!—to get into society—to dine with us—to dance with us! He deserves transportation. A man has been hung for a less crime."

"Explain yourself, Eliza. Is Mr. Lisle not a gentleman?"

"A gentleman! Pray, Margaret, don't insult that appellation by coupling it with Mr. Lisle."

"Who is he then?"

"A shopkeeper."

"A what?" ejaculated Margaret, whilst Caroline sprang from her seat, horror painted in every line of her countenance.

"A retail tradesman—A SHOPKEEPER!"

"What are you doing with Caroline?" demanded Mrs. Howard, perceiving, as she entered the room, that the latter was extended on the sofa, and her sisters were chafing her hands. "Is she ill?"

"Oh, this is dreadful!" whispered Margaret, leaning upon her mother's arm, as she burst into tears.

"What ails you, children?" cried Mrs. Howard in terror; for she saw there was something terrible to be told. "Has any ill happened to Caroline?"

"She has fainted now; but in the excitement of this discovery she confessed all."

"Confessed what, Margaret?" returned Mrs. Howard, scarcely above her breath.

"That she is privately married to Mr. Lisle."

Alas, how sad, that going to her husband's home! Turned from her mother's door, all communication with her sisters forbidden, she had no one to lean upon but him. It is true she loved him; but that love was not strong enough to break down old prejudices and all-powerful pride. He had told her he was in trade, ere she took that unpardonable and irrevocable step of uniting herself to him; but she cared not: *her* ideas of trade ran upon rich bankers and powerful merchants. And the graceful, aristocratic girl, who might have married and moved in her own sphere, visited at court, led the fashions, rolled in wealth, and passed her days in elegant indolence, was now the wife of a shopkeeper, even, as her sister had said, a shopkeeper in a country town.

She stood, beautiful as the scene she gazed on, at the western window of the small but elegant villa which had been her childhood's home, watching that golden sunset. A full, brilliant hue was cast upon all; clouds of crimson and purple, edged with a narrow streak of gold that glittered to the eye, floated in masses around, dazzling the world with their fulgence of light. Presently a change came on, and a soft rose-colour was thrown out, falling on the sweet face of Gertrude Lisle, and increasing, if possible, its inexpressible loveliness.

There was a deal of superstition in the imaginative mind of that dreamy girl, and she raised her eyes to heaven and clasped her hands, half in prayer, half in thankfulness ; for the unusual beauty of the evening seemed an omen that told of the success of her cherished dream.

"Are you counting the stars, Gertrude ?" suddenly demanded, in a gay, careless voice, an elegant young man who had entered the room hastily. She knew the tones well—they were dearer to her than any she had yet heard or ever would hear. Before she turned, William Ricard had clasped his arms round her ; and drawing her beautiful face to his bosom, kissed her repeatedly.

They stood together, watching the night's beauty, long, long after every ray of the sun had passed away ; conversing eloquently on many subjects, for both were gifted with unusual intellect. The worlds above, literature, the topics of the day, and *love* ; all found words, and words of deep interest.

But happy hours quickly glide away ; and Mr. Ricard, with honeyed words of passion and a whispered blessing, left her for the night.

Gertrude stole into another sitting-room, the windows of which looked upon the road, that she might watch him as he left the house. Tall, agile, and graceful, his step was quick and light, and he was soon removed from her eager sight. With a deep sigh, she turned away ; and, calling for a light, took it, and proceeded quietly up-stairs ; trying the door of her mother's dressing-room. It was fastened.

"Well, what is it?" demanded a querulous voice from the inside. The voice—but, ah ! how altered in expression !—of the once fascinating Caroline Howard.

"Will you not come down, mamma? The supper has been on the table some time."

"I don't want any supper : take it by yourself, Gertrude."

"At least let me come in and give you a light, mamma."

"What nonsense are you thinking of?" replied Mrs. Lisle, opening the door ; "I have had lights these two hours."

Mrs. Lisle sank again on her sofa, and resumed the employment from which her daughter had interrupted her—novel reading.

Gertrude stood for a few minutes unheeded, till her mother, raising her eyes to look for her smelling-salts, addressed her.

"I told you to go and take your supper, Gertrude. You may bring me a glass of wine and a piece of cake—is there any cake left?"

"I think not," answered Gertrude. "But a small piece, I am sure, if any."

"Then let another be made to-morrow : remember to give the orders yourself, in case I should forget it. Part of a captain's biscuit will do for me to-night ; or a bit of bread. And let the tray go away when you have finished : your father, I suppose, will come in as usual—in no fit state for supper or anything else."

Gertrude carried the glass of wine and biscuit to her mother, taking the same refreshment herself. She then entered her own bed-room; and, putting out the candle, sat at the open window in the bright moonlight.

Gertrude was alone; but what mattered it?—*she* lived not in the present but in the future. She was not like other girls. Her very childhood had been lone and sad, and until she loved William Ricard she had scarcely known any description of enjoyment. She had been permitted to have no companions. The town they lived in was what is called an aristocratic one, as all cathedral towns are; and her father was but a tradesman in it. As a matter of course, Gertrude was excluded from the higher grades of society, and with any other her mother would have thought it contamination to mingle. Mr. Lisle was rich for his station. The only child of wealthy parents, he had received the education of a gentleman; he was one in person and manners. But of what avail was that? he was inadmissible in that exclusive society which alone would have been acceptable to his wife. From her very infancy had Gertrude been fostered in the lap of luxury and pride, and in ideas far more exalted than her position warranted. Taught by her mother to look upon trade and tradespeople with contempt, that her true rank ought to have been a high one, the sensitive girl saw, with a bitterness of feeling that few can imagine, *that she was looked down upon by her own rank*—by those whom she had been brought up to consider but her equals. With only one family had she been suffered to associate, and that but slightly. The widow of an officer, of sufficient rank to suit Mrs. Lisle, and sufficiently poor to bar her entrance into society, had settled in Paterstone; and with this lady's children had Gertrude mixed. But she was a quiet, sad girl, and seemed ever happier with her books and studies than at play. Frequent disputes occurred between Mr. and Mrs. Lisle; for when the first rapture of love had worn away, Caroline awoke with a painful consciousness of her fallen position; and recriminations loud and deep, which were to end but with their lives, passed from one to the other. The unhappy, sensitive Gertrude would shrink tremblingly from the room, and weep in silence and terror.

But sad as were her outward circumstances, Gertrude Lisle had that within which could cast a halo of light round the darkest fate—genius of the highest order. Gifted with great imagination, a remarkably retentive memory, and unusual intellectual capacity, she had every requisite for becoming an author, and an author of no mean deserts. Writing was with her a passion.

Often from early childhood would she steal to her own room, and with a pencil and a sheet of paper write tales, which she afterwards read to herself with inexpressible delight. No one suspected this; for the extreme sensitiveness which characterised her prevented her disclosing

her talent to any one. So she grew up ; her passion for composing and her power increasing with her years. Her reading had been miscellaneous ; bad and good, but sufficiently extensive. She was not so inexperienced as most girls are at her age, for independently of her deep thought and care, she had been her mother's travelling companion at different times to various parts of the Continent. Greatly attached to her father, she saw with sorrow that he had gradually become the victim of a vice, the very name of which, as a habit, gave her terror, and she knew that it was caused by her mother's treatment of him. Mr. Lisle generally left home about ten in the morning for his place of business, and formerly had returned punctually in the evening at the dinner-hour : latterly he had come home at all hours of the night—*intoxicated*.

Pale and sad, Gertrude seemed to live but in sorrow. Little consolation had she indeed for her portion, save the proud consciousness of her talent, and the delight derived from its secret employment.

But how was all changed when she became acquainted with Mr. Ricard! it was like passing from night into day. It may easily be conceived how intensely a woman, possessed of the traits of character peculiar to Gertrude, would love, when the passion was once called forth. Her very life was altered ; and her days, which had scarcely given rise, apart from her own thoughts, to a happy moment, were now blissful as those of paradise.

Yet there were times when drawbacks to this felicity presented themselves to her mind. William Ricard said he loved her, and she thought he told her true ; but the painful idea, that he too looked down upon her, recurred perpetually. To his family she was not admitted : they passed her in the street, though aware of William's intimacy with her, as one unnoticeable and unknown.

Her writings were very various—the novel, the historical romance, essays, and short tales; all, however, bore the indelible stamp of genius. Ah ! Gertrude Lisle was despised by the frothy butterflies of the world, but the conviction that she was in reality so far above her self-thought superiors—that the time might come when they would bow down to her talents, and be proud to call her friend, was ever present to her soul.

For months, nay years, had she brooded upon the possibility of publishing ; anonymously at first, until her writings should be known and appreciated ;—her fame in the mouths of men. Then would she declare herself ; and the despised tradesman's daughter be courted and recognized in society, as one who, from her genius no less than through her maternal ancestors, had a right there ; and William Ricard should own she was worthy even of him. Oh, this hopeful dream—the dream of fame, of appreciation—how blissful, how thrilling it was ! And what would it end in ?

After much communing with herself, Gertrude had written to one of the first publishers in London, with great timidity and without giving her name, asking if they would take her work—one that she named. To this letter she was expecting an answer, and hope and fear alternated in her breast.

She sat, as we have said, at the window in the moonlight; visions of fame in future ages floating through her intense thoughts like flashes of light, even as the white, fleecy clouds above floated in the firmament.

Anxiously she watched, but some hours elapsed ere the appearance of a dark rolling mass, falling rather than walking up the gravel drive of the house, gave notice of the return of her father. Gertrude opened her chamber door, and crept partly down the stairs, ready to afford assistance, lest his helpless situation should cause a fall or any other accident. She did not dare go down and show herself, for when in liquor he was sometimes violent and abusive in the extreme. The once handsome, intellectual young man, how was he altered! but fearful must have been the change in his state of mind to drive him to such a course:—people may well talk of the misery that arises from unequal marriages. He managed, unassisted, to reach his chamber, and Gertrude re-entered hers.

A short period elapsed. Gertrude walked daily to the library, where she had directed an answer from the publisher to be sent. At length it came—it was there; the shopman gave her the letter; and with trembling hands and a flushed cheek she took it, and turned towards home again.

As she was leaving the library William Ricard came up. He was walking a little way by her side, when his sisters unexpectedly encountered them. With a haughty toss of the head and a contemptuous look, the Misses Ricard passed her, taking not the slightest notice of their brother, although he raised his hat to a lady who was with them. His face flushed greatly, as did Gertrude's; and in a somewhat confused, hasty manner he wished her good morning, and left her.

She was in her own room; she held the letter in her hands. It was a formidable one to appearance, with an imposing seal—a great coat-of-arms, or something that looked like it.

How she trembled! was that letter to be the realization of her hopes? Her fingers quivered so that she could scarcely break the seal.

London, August 10th.
“MADAM,—In reply to the communication with which you have favoured us, we regret to say that an unusual multiplicity of business prevents our having the honour of publishing the work, which under other circumstances we might have been happy to do; and remain,

“Madam, “Your most obedient Servants,
“SETFORTH & GETALL.”

Gertrude sat gazing on the letter, the pulsation in her heart stopped, and the drops of perspiration gathered on her brow.

Again she sat that evening by the western window, William Ricard alone her companion ; for her mother, especially of late, chose to pass most of her time in her own room.

He seemed restless and uneasy ; not sitting quietly by Gertrude as of yore, engaged in conversation interspersed with a few precious endearments, but was pacing the room with uncertain steps ; sometimes answering Gertrude's remarks, but mostly remaining silent.

The converse had turned upon the subject ever uppermost in her thoughts : the greatest of all God's gifts—genius.

"But what would you think," she demanded, continuing the conversation in a hushed tone, "of one, gifted with all its attributes, whose power was reverenced by the world, worshipped by the herd ; suppose this were a woman, and, apart from her talents, you loved her ?"

"Gertrude !"

"But suppose she were of ignoble blood ; one whose birth did not entitle her to mingle with your class—who never had mixed with them—could you marry her then ?"

"Were she a daughter of the meanest hind," he answered with enthusiasm, "yet gifted as you describe, I should be proud if she would consent to be my wife. Genius is the only attribute which can so enoble its possessor, as to set aside and render worthless the distinctions of the world."

Her heart throbbed at his reply, and she bent her head downwards, the enthusiasm of hope realized lighting her cheek. She leaped in anticipation the barrier of time and difficulties ; and thoughts of future triumphs, crowned by love, came fast in all their fascination.

"But we have been imagining fiction, Gertrude," interrupted her lover : "we must descend to stern reality. I—I—came this evening to—break—some—news to you—to bid you farewell."

"Where are you going ?" she inquired, startled from her imaginings.

"Not anywhere."

"I do not understand you, William. Are you about to leave Paterstone ?"

"Not at present, that I know of."

"I thought you said you were come to bid me farewell," she answered, drawing a long, relieved breath.

"So I did—so I am. But I am not going away."

Gertrude sank back on her chair : a dread, like the sickness of death, had fallen on her soul.

"I have loved you, truly, Gertrude ; I do still ; but I have not a shilling, save the inheritance at my father's death. And this he will deprive me of, unless I give you up."

He stopped, but she did not speak ; her very brain was whirling.

"God in heaven bless you, Gertrude, my love," he murmured, when he stood up to bid her farewell, and clasped her passionately to his bosom; "this is painful to me as to you—believe so:—but I had no alternative. I shall never love again as I have loved you."

The servants found her on the floor insensible, and many months elapsed ere she strove to lift from her heart one shade of the misery that consumed her.

Years had passed; and once more Gertrude Lisle stood watching the sunset, but under very different circumstances from those in which we have last seen her. She was now an orphan, poor and friendless. Her father's vices and her mother's extravagance had dissipated the fortune that ought to have descended to her; the former died in debt, and some of his trade liabilities had never been satisfied. The elegant villa, the only home she had ever known, had been torn from her; its furniture sold, and its establishment dispersed. Beyond the small cottage she now inhabited, which had been settled upon her by a relation, she had but a trifling annual sum, much too small to subsist upon, although she required but little.

William Ricard was by her side as of old. His father, too, had gone to his account, and the former portionless young man was now the owner of considerable wealth. Did he visit Gertrude as her lover, now that he was his own master? No. When misfortunes came upon her family he had sought them as a friend, and as such he had continued to visit her. Perhaps he was yet in heart her lover; but he was greatly alive to the importance of the position he held in society, and unwilling to take a step that would lessen it. And Gertrude, did she still love him? She did: deeply, passionately, enduringly as she had ever done. It was an afternoon in November, pleasant and bright for the season, but the shades of evening were now drawing in.

"I cannot imagine why you persist in this journey, Gertrude," exclaimed Ricard, at length, after some time had been spent in silence.

"I must go," she answered.

"At least, tell me your motive," he resumed.

"You shall know when I return."

Earnestly he urged her; and the entreaty of love—did it ever fail? Encouraged by the gloom of evening, which hid the blushes of her cheeks, her secret was revealed to him. The hopes of years, the cherished visions, the noble aspirations, hitherto entertained in vain but patient expectation, were opened to him, and the fact that this journey was about to be undertaken to realize them. Never, never for a moment had Gertrude doubted her ultimate success. It was this sanguine hope that had sustained her, and brought comfort to her heart, after the first anguish caused by Mr. Ricard's conduct had worn away.

Earnestly, and with great astonishment he listened. Her words were eloquent when the first timidity had passed ; and she felt that he had confidence in her powers, even as she had, and that he loved her still. But not a word, save those dictated by the strictest friendship, was spoken by either.

"Have you sufficient funds for this journey, Gertrude ?" he whispered, as he took her hand to bid her adieu. William Ricard had a generous mind, and would fain have assisted her could he have done it with delicacy.

"Oh, quite, quite, thank you," she replied, earnestly ; "more than I want, more than I can spend." How was he to know that her words were untrue ?

"God speed you," he whispered.

Gertrude Lisle was in London. Nobody by her side to advise her in what manner to proceed. She had manuscripts, and she knew that there were editors and publishers, but she did *not* know how to bring her works to their notice.

Selecting a few articles suited to the pages of magazines, she took them with her own hands, and left one with each of the principal editors. But she left them anonymously. What answer could she expect ? She knew that the works would be, or ought to be, their own passport to favour. She then wrote to a west-end publisher about one of her larger works, and received for answer, that he would take upon himself the publication and a share of the risk, if his reader thought well of it. But she must advance fifty or sixty guineas for advertisements, &c.

Fifty guineas ! it was a sum far beyond Gertrude's means. The few jewels which had belonged to her mother, and some of her own more expensive clothes, purchased in better days, had been already disposed of for this very London journey. Practising of necessity the most rigid economy, and finding she had to wait, she removed from the decent lodgings she first occupied in the outskirts of London, to a solitary, mean chamber. She thought not of her self-denials—they were but for a time : she should soon have wherewithal to procure not only the necessities, but the luxuries of life. Her works once known and read by the public, their triumphant success was beyond all doubt, and without loss of time she would publish others. But she did not dwell on, or care for, the wealth that would be hers. She was poorly clad ; weary with much walking ; cold, and often hungry : yet gold bore in her heart but a secondary consideration ; fame—fame was in store for her : appreciation was advancing with rapid strides.

This was the golden page of her idolized dream. Never, never, even when fame and all its accompaniments came, could more rapturous joy

visit her heart than sit in it now. And she knew that when her longings were realized, her name spread far and wide, as one of the favoured children of earth, she should be made the bride of William Ricard. Make the most of your darling visions while they last, Gertrude Lisle ; the brightest dream must have an ending !

She glanced over pages of her own works again and again, conscious that they were worthy to take their stand by the side of the most successful. She read the trash perpetually put forth from the press : works which she should have felt ashamed to write, still more to publish. If *these* were deemed worthy a place in the world of literature, how much more would hers be ! And the magazines—oh, how many of their pages were wasted ! Let not the reader suppose that Gertrude over-rated her own merits ; she did not : her genius was of that rare and surpassing quality which rendered all attempts easy of achievement.

Her later works had borne an infinite superiority over her former ones. The sad experience in worldly matters—the deep knowledge her heart had gained, through the faithlessness of William Ricard—had been of service to her writings ; and the deep feeling and pathos which coloured them, had never been observed save for that event. Her earlier works, and amongst them the one about which she had written to the London publishers from Paterstone, had been consigned to the flames, with a smile and a blush of almost shame, that she should ever have thought them so excellent.

Do my readers require to be told the sequel ? With tremulous suspense, Gertrude, month after month, grasped the magazines to see if her contributions appeared in the index page—in vain. Her anonymous articles were not used, perhaps not even looked at. When she, *after months of deferred hope*—and we all know what it is said to be to the heart : some of us know what it *is*—called at the magazine offices, the manuscripts, apparently just as she had left them, were returned to her without a word. And the larger works ? The publishers were all alike, all must be furnished with money in advance, differing only in the amount ; advertising was very expensive : some required eighty pounds, some a hundred, some more. They might as well have asked her for eighty thousand.

And so the dream—the dream that for years had consoled Gertrude Lisle's existence, rendering all other things of life to her a vision, and that the reality—the dream was over. It had rudely vanished for ever.

She returned to Paterstone in disappointment and isolation ; the future now appearing a sort of misty blank, shadowing forth ideas of poverty and death. It was a bitter trial to meet William Ricard : had she not imparted the secret to him, she could have borne it better. Gertrude herself felt that the treatment she had experienced was unmerited ; but would *he* believe so ? She knew how deserving her works were of a place amongst the choicest ; but the cold, selfish world

had rejected them without trial. She was poor, unknown, and consequently neglected : she had no one to show her the way or help her on the path to fame.

It was not consumption that ailed Gertrude Lisle, yet she was wasting away to the grave. She had known for weeks, ever since that stern awakening to reality which had sent the iron into her soul, that nothing could recal her to life ; and one by one, the writings which had caused her so much toil and research were consumed to ashes.

She lay on the couch ; the Bible, now her only companion, in her hand. Her soft dark eyes were larger than of yore, and her cheek had lost its rose-colour ; but she was still exquisitely beautiful. She was very young to die, only five or six and twenty ; but disappointment had aged her spirit, so that it was as of one stricken in years. Let not the reader fancy he has been reading a fiction. Would he had been !

It was a warm, balmy autumn day. The birds sang as in spring ; the sun shone on the deepening foliage ; and the bells of one of the churches of Paterstone were ringing merrily on Gertrude's ear, bringing to her a sensation of joy. Joy that the day was bright for others.

" You are hearkening to the bells, Miss Gertrude," cried the old servant, perceiving that Gertrude had looked up from her book.

" I like to listen to the bells, Sarah : I always did. I suppose they are ringing for somebody's marriage."

" Bless me !" exclaimed the woman, turning suddenly round, and facing Gertrude, " to think that it should have slipped my memory almost as soon as told. I heard all about it from the baker this morning when he brought the bread."

" About what ? " asked Gertrude.

" About the wedding. It is Mr. Ricard who is married to-day."

Gertrude raised her hand to her face, apparently smoothing down the braids of hair. Presently she spoke.

" I thought his marriage was not to take place for a week or two."

" No more it was, ma'am ; so they said at least : but something I suppose, hurried it on. Do you feel worse, Miss Gertrude ? you look quite ghastly."

" The old stitch in my side, Sarah, nothing else. You can go down stairs now."

" It's a brave wedding, I'll answer for it," returned the servant, who loved a gossip dearly, like many others of her class ; " a brave show, as far as carriages and feathers and company's concerned. Somehow I don't fancy it'll turn out as fine as it looks. But Mr. William has got his hankering—a grand lady for a wife."

Gertrude made no reply. She poured some scent on her handkerchief, and passed it across her brow ; and the servant continued :

" It's a fine thing to marry a title. Lady Louisa Ricard ! what a

sound it has! But she's cold and proud, and an awful temper. I've had it from them as lived with her."

Proudly dashed the horses up the street of Paterstone, bearing the bridegroom and bride from their wedding tour, now that the honeymoon was over. William Ricard sat by the side of his wife: he was handsome and noble to look at; more so than she was; for her features, though fair and well formed, had a haughty, repelling expression.

As he handed his bride from the carriage to the hall of his mansion, he murmured a few words of welcome to her new home, and they passed on to their apartments. Was it to be a happy home to her? That, time had yet to prove.

Mr. Ricard was strolling down the street the next day, when he met Sarah, and stopped her to inquire after Miss Lisle. The old woman shook her head as she answered.

"You wouldn't be wanting to see her before she dies, would you, sir? if so, there's little time to be lost."

"What do you mean, Sarah?"

"I'm glad I met you, sir. I was a-thinking yesterday that perhaps you'd like to know how ill she was, seeing that you have been a friend there so long. Poor child! it is but a scanty lot of friends she's had in life, anyhow."

"You said Miss Lisle was dying once before, you know, Sarah, and you were mistaken; perhaps now also—"

"I was not mistaken, sir," interrupted the servant. "I meant then that Miss Gertrude would never look up again, but gradually decay away; and I was right. But she is certainly dying now. I have lived in the family, as you know, sir, many years. Miss Gertrude was always quiet and thoughtful, and of late years sad; but it was that precious journey to London that seemed to do all the mischief. Heaven alone knows what happened there, or what she went for: I've often tried to fathom it. But she has been dying by inches since she came back, and I am sure has not cared or sought to live."

"Oh, Gertrude!" sobbed William Ricard, as he hung over her, and clasped her cold hands in his, "live—live for me. I cannot say as I could once have said to you; but live to be my friend, my sister."

"Look at me," she answered at intervals, for the chill of death was gathering on her. "See how impossible are your words, even did I wish them—"

"You are so young and beautiful to die!"

"I am quite resigned. That dreadful disappointment I am even reconciled to now. I thought it frightfully unjust and cruel at the time; but I feel certain, since I have been able to reflect calmly upon it, that my fate was no worse than that of many others; that there are hun-

dreds who have experienced the same, and whom it has killed as it has killed me. Obscure as I was, I ought not to have relied upon success. The merit that I depended on was never looked into ; and through want of influence I was unable to make it known. My worst regret is, that the talents which were given to me by God, the world has prevented my exercising. I am going down to the grave, knowing that my existence has been a useless one ; but I try not to think of that now. How is your—Lady Louisa, I mean—your wife?"

"She is well," Mr. Ricard answered. "Gertrude," he continued, solemnly, "I have not behaved to you as I ought, and I am here to beseech your forgiveness, before you are gone for ever. You ought to have been my wife ; God knows I have never loved another. But I made pride and ambition my idol ; I bowed to the opinion of the world, and shrank from its censure ; and I have been rightly dealt with. Our wedded life would have been one of happiness ; mine—I have seen it almost ever since my wedding-day—will be that of misery."

"The time for regret is past," she gasped, as he kissed away the tears that fell on her face from his own eyes. "Endeavour to be to your wife the husband you would have been to me."

"She shall never have cause to complain of me," he answered ; "but my interest in this life, the heyday of romance and love, passes away with you. Think not I say so from the mere excitement of the moment. I have loved you sincerely, fervently ; even, Gertrude, to this hour ; although I married another, I loved but you. And God in His justice has requited me."

Ere the morning dawned, Gertrude Lisle was no more. She died of that often-quoted—particularly by lovers and poets—but most rare malady, a broken heart. Broken from the day which had shown her the fallacy of her long and fondly trusted Dream.



A SUMMER DAY.

THERE'S a gaping rent in the curtain

That longs for a needle and thread,

There's a garment that ought to be finished,

And a book that wants to be read.

There's a letter that ought to be answered,

There are clothes to fold away,

And I know these tasks are wanting,

And ought to be done to-day.

But how can I mend the curtain,

While watching this silvery cloud ;

And how can I finish the garment,

When the robin calls so loud ?

And the whispering trees are telling

Such stories above my head,

That I can but lie and listen,

And the book is all unread.

If I try to write the letter,

I am sure one-half the words

Will be in the curious language

Of my chattering friends, the birds.

The lilacs bloom in the sunshine,

The roses nod and smile,

And the clothes that ought to be folded

And ironed, must wait awhile.

I lie in the chestnut shadows,

And gaze at the summer sky,

Bidding the cares and troubles

And trials of life pass by.

The beautiful chestnut-blossoms

Are falling about my feet,

And the dreamy air is laden

With their odours rare and sweet.

The honey-bees hum in the clover,

The grasses rise and fall,

The robin stops and listens,

As he hears the brown thrush call.

And the birds sing to me softly,

The butterfly flits away—

Oh, what could be sweeter than living

This beautiful summer day !

A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY.

BY A CAMBRIDGE MAN.

SOME years back I entered my name as a pensioner at Merton College, Cambridge, and in due course went into residence. Amongst the men of my year was one of the name of Wilson. From the first I was taken with his appearance, but, as we were both shy of making premature advances, it was not till our second term that we came to know each other intimately; from that time acquaintance quickly ripened into friendship, and to this friendship the remarkable incidents I have now to record owe their origin.

At that time the so-called "spiritual manifestations" were exciting considerable attention, and we were both led to take an interest in the subject, partly from mere curiosity and partly in the hope that some light might be thereby thrown on problems in mental philosophy which had occasioned us considerable difficulty. Many a time we met, now in one room, now in another, with men of all shades of disposition present to assist and criticize; and together we did our best to try and test what truth there might be in the matter. Tables turned and rapped, chairs creaked, and the like; it is needless to enter upon a description of phenomena by this time so well known to all; Wilson and I both arrived at the conclusion that, though to all appearance the tables were moved by some current, electric or otherwise, yet the messages rapped out were always to be traced to some person or other present, such person voluntarily or involuntarily influencing the raps. I have by me now a careful analysis of all the various manifestations, in which each is traced to its presumed cause; perhaps some day I may investigate the subject more thoroughly, and publish at length the result of such investigations.

One evening, after a séance more remarkable than most others which we had attended, Wilson and I sat smoking in my room and endeavouring to reconcile what we had just seen and heard with our previous theories. What had most puzzled us was this: we had both been mere on-lookers, standing away from the table and those who surrounded it, our object being to test its performance quite impartially. I had thought of a name, the name of one very dear to me but quite unknown to any one else present; this name I requested that the table should rap out. After a slight wavering, as though somewhat uncertain, the name was given, letter by letter, with the utmost correctness. Wilson had previously agreed, whatever should be the result of my test, to apply a similar one himself; this he now did, and in his case also the answer was correct. I ought, perhaps, to say, that neither of us

was in sight of those round the table, a screen, in fact, concealing us from the observation of all others in the room.

"Well," said Wilson, at last, "I confess this has about stumped me; I am convinced no one in the room but myself knew the name of which I had thought; yet it was tapped out perfectly correctly; how to explain it I really don't know."

For my part I was less puzzled, as for some time past I had cherished a theory which, if true, would account for things still more extraordinary. "Look here," said I, "you are ready to acknowledge that in certain cases one mind may influence another without the intervention of words; to this truth those numerous so-called *coincidences*, which have given rise to such proverbs as, 'Talk of the devil, and his tail will appear,' bear witness; why may we not go further, and suppose that every mind can act upon others in a like manner? Thus, when you thought of the name, your thought was impressed upon the mind of some one else who knowingly or unknowingly influenced the table."

For some time we talked the matter over, and though he did not quite give in his adhesion to the theory, he agreed that perhaps this particular instance might be explained in some such manner. A day or two afterwards we were talking again on the same subject, when Wilson suggested, that were the theory true, it would be possible to verify it by experiment; if mind could act on mind involuntarily, why not voluntarily as well. Any how, we resolved to make the attempt, and fixed that very evening for the purpose.

At about nine o'clock we met, and soon set to work; he at one table, I at another, each with a candle to himself, and provided with pen, ink, and paper. I was to make the first trial. Concentrating my will so far as circumstances permitted, I endeavoured to fasten a certain idea in his mind; when I nodded my head he was to write down the thought present to him at the moment. For some time no particular thought impressed him, and when he did at length write one down, it had no reference whatever to that which I had attempted to inject. He next tried on me, but with no better success; and that evening all our attempts resulted in failure. As, however, it occurred to both of us that our proximity to each other acted as a distraction, and tended to neutralize any effect that might otherwise be produced, we determined, for the next evening, each to remain in his own room, and try how the experiment would act when we were thus situated.

Accordingly, next evening, for an hour and a half by alternate quarters of an hour, did I attempt to influence Wilson, or resign myself to receive his influence, taking notes both of the thoughts I tried to inject and of those I seemed to receive. For some time my thoughts kept wandering, and I was unable to concentrate my will as I could have wished, but during the last half-hour my attention was wholly given to what I was about, and I seemed to lose all consciousness of anything else.

It was some little time after the hour agreed on for concluding our experiments had passed, that I realised the fact, and putting my notes together, ran off across the court to Wilson's rooms. As I entered he was just laying down his pen, and we proceeded forthwith to compare notes. At first the comparison was most unsatisfactory, no agreement, even of the most partial character, being discoverable; but at length Wilson read out a thought which he had received, and which was down in my notes as the first I had attempted to inject in my third quarter of an hour. From this point all went swimmingly, and our remaining notes corresponded in the most complete manner: the theory seemed to be confirmed.

It would be wearisome to tell how, night after night, we continued our experiments; suffice it to say that at length, after repeated practice, we were able by this means with but little trouble, to telegraph mentally to each other any message we might desire; and although it did not invariably happen that at any time our first attempt might be successful, yet we were always conscious in ourselves as to its success or not; for instance, I could tell whether Wilson received any given message, and whether any message I might seem to receive really came from him. We soon also tried how we could affect others; and though our success in these cases was not universal, we were successful quite often enough to confirm our theory, and sometimes to afford ourselves considerable amusement besides. One rather remarkable instance is worth mentioning:—

There was a man in our college debating class, Osborne by name, a weak-minded though harmless individual, who always made a point of speaking, whatever might be the subject. One evening, the subject announced being "Parliamentary Reform," we determined that this Osborne, whose Conservatism was known to be of the most uncompromising description, should somewhat astonish his hearers. Accordingly we concocted a suitable speech, and, to make assurance doubly sure, agreed to unite our forces and *both* "will" our speech to be delivered. I felt we should be successful, and we were; the unfortunate speaker commenced by a few words of denunciation against all democrats, but, apparently as much to his own astonishment as that of his hearers, was quickly made to change his tone, confess himself a Radical, fraternize in spirit with Mr. Bright, and even propose a little Reform Bill of his own, of a most levelling character. When at length we removed the spell, the poor fellow sat down with a look of such intense amazement depicted on his not over intelligent countenance as few that saw it are likely to forget. His auditors were certainly considerably amused, but Wilson and I agreed never to repeat the experiment, as we feared the effect might be hurtful on a brain at best not over bright. But to proceed with my own personal narrative.

For some months we continued to use our power for communication

with one another, neither of us having any suspicion that the operation, which was a convenience to both, might not be wholly free from admixture with evil. Our confidence in it first became disturbed during the Lent Term of our second year. The day, strangely enough for that season, had been close and oppressive, and towards evening distant thunder seemed to hint at a storm not very far off. At about half-past eleven I went to lie down for the night, and soon afterwards heard the rain pelting upon the tiles just overhead, whilst the deep roll of the thunder, with ever and anon a sharp, shattering peal, burst through the more monotonous undertone of the rain, which at the same time it seemed to startle into yet greater vehemence. From a child I had never been nervous in a thunder storm ; on the contrary, I was wont to exult at the roar of the elements, and plunge madly in imagination into the whirl and uproar ; now with rapid grasp seizing the lightning lance and hurling it onwards with superhuman strength, now sweeping with triumphant energy down the wild pathway which the thunder peal had cleft. Such times had been to me times almost of mental intoxication they had been wont to wrap me in spirit far from the body with all its clingings and confinements, and to endow me with a new and perhaps not less natural existence. What then was my surprise, for I could feel surprise even at such a moment, when, in place of my usual exultation, a nervous terror seized me, and I found myself crouching helplessly in trembling horror beneath the bed clothes, and vainly endeavouring to escape from some unknown and horribly mysterious evil. To describe how I passed that night would be impossible ; the storm ceased, but my fears did not cease with it, and when at length I sunk to sleep, it was only to become a prey to dreams far more distressing than even my waking terrors had been.

Next morning, when I saw Wilson, some slight clue was obtained to the mysterious effect which the night's storm had had upon me. I appeared that, from his boyhood, Wilson had always been possessed by an unconquerable dread of the lightning, and, from what I could gather, the effects which I had experienced the night before had been but the duplicate, so to speak, of those which he had felt. More extraordinary still, on further comparing notes, it appeared that our dreams had been the same ; whilst in some manner, my mind also had reflected itself in him, for he remembered feeling surprise when the first terror seized him, which could not be accounted for in any other manner than by tracing it to that which I had felt, and which was *natural* to me alone.

For some days the memory of this incident gave me considerable uneasiness : I did not quite see what to make of it. In abnormal states of mind, such as this one of terror which had affected Wilson, should we both always be liable to similar affections, or was this an extraordinary and perfectly exceptional case ? The question was somewhat important, but I was quite unable to find any certain answer for it. For

a week or so we gave up the mental telegraphy, as we had named it; at the end of that time, however, seeing no further harmful results, we resumed the practice as before.

About a week after this resumption, one Sunday evening, sitting alone in my room, having just come out from chapel, I was in that state of listless indifference to surrounding objects, which often comes with the hour called blind-man's-holiday: a kind of drowsy meditation, half dream, half thought. Suddenly I awoke to the consciousness that I was reviewing in my mind a train of circumstances, in some strange connection with what seemed myself, and yet with which, what I may call my memory proper, refused to have anything to do. It is difficult to describe a state so complicated, but it appeared as though for the moment I were both myself and not myself, and that whilst in the one character I was reviewing a not wholly pleasant retrospect, in the other I was commenting upon the actions reviewed, and wondering why I should be reviewing them. After some time the impression grew gradually fainter, and faded finally away, leaving but some slight hints of its coming, and that vague, puzzled feeling with which we strive to catch at some dream which seems always to be eluding us. The fact itself I could remember; the items which had passed in review before me I was unable to recal.

I am thus particular in describing this first impression because it was but the forerunner of many others similar to it; I fancied, too, that with the repetition, the memory of these incidents strengthened, so that I afterwards recalled what seemed to be detached scenes from these visionary reminiscences.

During this time Wilson was away, his father having been suddenly taken ill. I had made one or two attempts to open mental communication with him, but whether owing to the distance, or, as I rather think, to the pre-occupation of his own mind, all such attempts had failed. On his return about a fortnight later, I talked the matter over with him, and found that he too, three or four times lately, had had similar experiences to those which I have narrated; whilst, from one or two of the incidents which still clung to our respective memories, there appeared little doubt that, with each of us, such were derived from an involuntary reflection from the memory of the other.

After this, whether owing to our nearer neighbourhood or to some other cause, these gleams of strange intelligence increased upon us both. I would find myself, almost unconsciously, reviewing long past scenes in which I had never acted, yet in which I seemed to be an actor; reviewing them, now with pride at some action which was good and praiseworthy, now with sorrow and bitter regret for some vice or folly which had stained a life. Wilson too was similarly affected; each seemed to possess a private entrance into the past history of the other; our souls were joined in some hitherto unknown union.

The unpleasantness of our position may be readily imagined; had

we had not been friends in truth, it would have been unbearable ; neither of us was able, had we wished it, to keep a secret from the other, nor could either of us by any effort of the will, prevent being made a sharer in the other's thoughts ; our consciousnesses, once distinct, seemed mixed ; we were not merely partakers in the joy of each other's virtues, but compelled to share the sadness for each other's sins. We were linked together inseparably, and there seemed no power capable of disuniting us.

For some months this state of things continued, and the time for our final examinations drew on. We were both going in for double honours, and, in spite of the strange incidents of the last few months, had both made considerable progress in our reading. Wilson was the better mathematician, I the better classic ; he expected to be placed fairly high among the wranglers, and to take a second class in classics ; I hoped for a first class in classics, and thought it probable I might just secure a place amongst the senior optimes in mathematics, so that I might afterwards enter for the Chancellor's medal. In the mathematical tripos the examination is in January ; for the classical in March ; until both were over we determined to think as little as might be upon our strange situation ; and certainly, whether from the strength of our determination or the engagements of hard reading, by January we seemed in a more normal condition ; the attacks of mutual introspection becoming first intermittent, and latterly much less frequent.

At length the time for the mathematical examination arrived. Neither of us had much anxiety with regard to the first three days ; we were well up in the elementary subjects, and had no doubt about getting through ; when the lists came out at the usual time, both our names were contained therein. During the second part of the examination, all again went on swimmingly ; I seemed positively inspired ; problems I should formerly have puzzled over with hopeless clumsiness, were now solved almost instantaneously ; and when the last paper was given in, I felt that I had acquitted myself in a manner perfectly astonishing. Wilson said that he also had done better than he had expected.

On the appointed day the lists came out ; we were too excited to be at the Senate house during the announcement, but friends soon brought the news ; Wilson was seventh wrangler, and, marvel of marvels, I was bracketed his equal. The truth flashed across me instantaneously, strange that it had not done so before,—my cleverness was reflected from my friend : his mind had been the means of inspiring both our papers.

It will be readily concluded that at the examination for the Classical Tripos a similar occurrence took place ; it did ; but in this instance the results were not altogether the same. A day or two after the examination was concluded, we were both sent for by the examiners. Through-

out, it seems that our papers had been marvellously alike, but one unfortunate copy of verses, upon the execution of which I had particularly prided myself, had positively been sent up in duplicate by Wilson. The examiners were astounded. It was impossible for us to have copied, since we had not been seated near to each other; we could not have seen the papers previously; moreover our character for honour stood high, and the tutor of our college was one of the examiners. We endeavoured to explain the case as it really stood, but had better have been silent, for the story seemed so utterly improbable, that its recital merely caused our sanity to be doubted. The thing seemed perfectly inexplicable, and with a caution we were dismissed. It appears that afterwards they came to the conclusion, on the plea of some papers having been lost, to give this particular paper again with a different copy of verses. Many were the objurgations of the men at so unprecedented a proceeding, but the thing was done, and this time we heard nothing further of the business. When the lists came out I was fourth in the first class, and Wilson two places below me.

We were both in residence at the time, and that afternoon agreed to have a row, and think over what was to be done for the future. A degree such as we had taken was sure to bring with it a fellowship, and it was a question whether under the circumstances we could honestly accept the distinction; we at length agreed to do so since a single first such as we should each naturally have taken would have been enough to ensure our procuring the honour.

As our row took us past the bathing-sheds, Wilson proposed that, the day being fine, we should moor our boat in the tank, out of the current, and have a plunge. I hesitated a little, not having previously bathed that season; however, as the weather was warm, I thought it would do no harm to venture. The boats were soon moored, and we prepared to jump in. Wilson was first in the water; as he entered it a most peculiar sensation came over me, which I felt was in some manner connected with my friend; turning to look at him, for before my back had been towards the water, I found he was nowhere to be seen; however, supposing him to be taking a short dive, I waited for his re-appearance at the surface. At length, the top of his head became visible, but only for an instant, and in such a manner as to convince me that the owner must be in a state of semi-unconsciousness. Plunging in, I made towards the spot where I had seen him, and diving, just caught sight of the body; making for it, I grasped the nearest arm, and so brought him to the surface. No sooner was my head above water than I felt a repetition of the sensation previously experienced when Wilson plunged in. It seemed a kind of dizziness caused by excess of consciousness—an intoxication of vivid thought. I felt myself making an effort towards the shed, still clinging to Wilson by the arm; but of what passed further, so far as outward things were concerned, I was

totally unconscious. After the first confused whirl, my brain seemed gradually to settle down into a calm, whilst a marvellous series of phantasmagoria passed before my mental vision. I seemed to have entered into a large life, which was after all my true life, and to be endowed with a memory which could remember each minutest incident from the very first. And what a "first" that was; far back stretched the mighty past, far, far back, through all the ages of what men call Time. Ever and anon I found myself reflecting on my conduct while, under some ancient name, acting in scenes the world has since forgotten; aye and beyond time stretched that long review, back to ages when this world was yet unknown—back, far back, into the infinite. Only some few incidents in this marvellous reminiscence I have since been able to recall; but, as I think on these, others are borne in upon my mind, and, though at present unable to relate them, I may, perhaps, at some future time, have power to gather up such fragments of the vision as remain.

I must hasten to conclude my narrative. On regaining consciousness, I found we had both been rescued by some passing boat; although we both appeared wholly unconscious, I was found still retaining my grasp of Wilson's arm. The usual appliances served to restore us, and, after resting for a day or two, we were as well again as ever. Wilson's experience in the water had been similar to mine, though, so far as we could compare notes, the things remembered were not identical; in other words, his life also, in memory stretched back to an indefinite past, but its incidents were personal to himself as those of mine had been to me. What was the reason of our attack, I cannot, of course, say for certain; probably a temporary congestion of some kind, brought on by the sudden shock from the cold water; whether this, acting on the imagination in an abnormal state, produced the impressions I have noticed, or whether these impressions were caused by facts which had actually occurred, there may be a difference of opinion.

One thing is remarkable; from this date the unnatural union between Wilson and myself has been dissolved. We still continue fast friends as ever, and are now both fellows of our college, but each is familiar only with the consciousness of his own experiences, and is no longer liable to reflections from the memory of his friend. We often talk over the past, and it is with his full concurrence that I have drawn up the present narrative; he agreed with me that it would be best to state the facts simply as they occurred, and leave readers to account for them as best they may. In conclusion, we would advise others to be satisfied with our experience, and not to risk their own health and sanity by attempting similar experiments for themselves.

DOCTOR BARBE-BLEUE.

I.

"WHAT a gloomy old granite heap!" I said to myself, looking out of the window of my lodgings the first day of my arrival at N. I was hoping to have pleasant scenery for my daily prospect, but the green meadows and pretty streams all lay the other side of the house; while on my side there were deep, dark woods, and high hills, and from the darkest, woodiest part of all uprose the huge walls of a gray old castle. For a castle it certainly looked to be, as much as those that stand along the Rhine.

"Pray tell me who lives away up in that grand, dismal place with the two towers?" I said, to the rosy-cheeked maid who was bringing in my tea on a tray.

"That place belongs to Doctor Barbe-Bleue," she replied, shrugging her shoulders.

"And does he live there?" I asked, in idle curiosity.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, he lives there, he and his wife. You may see them riding by almost every day together. There they go now!" she exclaimed, stepping quickly to the window at the sound of horses' hoofs. "That is Doctor Barbe-Bleue, ma'am, and that is his wife."

I looked down into the quiet old street, and saw the equestrians coming. The gentleman was a little ahead, mounted on a coal-black horse, which plunged and fretted at the tightly-drawn rein. The gentleman was of a stout figure, apparently full fifty years old, and he carried himself with a haughty air, his heavy black eyebrows lowering over his flashing eyes. I could imagine a scornfully curling mouth tightly set, but to imagine was all I could do, for the lower part of his face was completely hidden by the immense thick black beard, which in a sort of wavy shagginess reached down to his breast. This beard was so very black that I really believe it might be said to own that rare shade called "purple-black," or "blue-black," the very intensity of jet. At my first glance, I felt a terror of the man, but an instant after, a kindly glance and gesture of his towards his wife disarmed me, and her glad, affectionate smile showed that she at least found him worthy of all love. She, the wife, was a perfect little darling of beauty, with shy, merry blue eyes, and dancing curls of golden hair. Her cheeks were flushed pink with exercise, and she urged on her brown pony as if she did not want to be left ever so little behind. They rode by and turned into a road which led through the forest, so we lost sight of them after a moment.

"How did that pretty young creature ever come to love that fierce-

looking man?" I exclaimed involuntarily, moving away from the window.

"That is what every one wondered when she married him," said the maid, who had an evident acquaintance with the subject.

In fact, I soon found that all the town people had their own ideas, more or less correct, about Doctor Barbe-Bleue and his charming young wife; some declaring that he led her a terrible life up in the dark stone tower, and others saying that he was only too good for such a trifling, wilful chit of a girl. Others who knew them best, believed in their perfect happiness, and as I, during my stay at N. learned here and there bit after bit of their history, and finally came to know the chief parties themselves, I, too, formed a theory of my own.

It seemed that the Barbe-Bleues were an old and wealthy family, who from time immemorial had in their succeeding generations occupied that great gloomy stone building, and owned the surrounding forests. In the last generation were two sons, the elder being heir to the demesnes, while the other, a youth of strange and moody temperament, went to far off lands to seek name and fortune. He had a passion for medicine, for chemistry, for singular sciences; and ignorant folk shook their heads when they spoke of him, as if he had made a league with the devil. At last, a year of pestilence swept over the country, and while the town people were dying by hundreds, the proud old Barbe-Bleue, the father, was struck down by the fell fate, only two days before his wife. And a week after, the eldest son, the heir, was smitten too. Then the old stone walls looked darker and gloomier than ever, for there was no life there, the whole place waiting, locked-up and deserted, for the return of the prodigal son, the wild, fitful Barbe-Bleue, last of his race. All this happened years and years ago.

At last he came, and set the town in an uproar, this Doctor Barbe-Bleue, physician, alchemist, astrologer, what you will. He did not come alone to his inheritance, for as his carriage drove through the town, through one of its glass panels peered a sallow, restless face, and a slender little hand impatiently brushed the dust from the pane. That was the last that was seen of her; she never quitted the castle; but somehow a rumour crept about that the Barbe-Bleues, man and wife, lived on wretched terms, that there were violent scenes sometimes behind closed doors, and terribly bitter words. The fact was, poor Doctor Barbe-Bleue had married a vixen. That was his misfortune. Socrates did the same thing. But when, ere long, the querulous, sickly lady died and found rest, and peace too, let us hope, there were not wanting some to whisper that there had been dark work up in the drear old tower: in fact, that Doctor Barbe-Bleue, in the way of his profession, had studied subtle poisons as well as saving remedies. However that might be, he did not seem to be troubled by a guilty conscience, but held himself yet more aloof from every one, wrapped up in his deep studies and weird experiments. Till at the end

of a year he suddenly left home, was gone a month, and returned with a new bride! A pale, fragile, lily-like creature she was, too frail for the bleak airs and lonely grandeur of her new home, and gently, almost reproachfully, she faded away day by day, till death claimed her also.

Then Doctor Barbe-Bleue grew more reckless, more gloomy, and fiercer than ever; and more than ever the people down in the town shook their heads when his name was mentioned. But he had nothing to do with them; they were never asked to enter his door; his servants were a trained set, brought with him from abroad, as reticent as he, and so his life was absolutely a mystery to his curious neighbours. All night long they could see his light burning up in the high tower where were his library and laboratory, and there was no knowing what wicked incantations might be going on.

More dreadful than all, now and then, at long intervals, some new fair face appeared peeping from the Doctor's carriage, some new graceful figure would unawares be met in the forest paths, or some merry, thrilling song be heard by passers by. At such times the Doctor would seem more like other men, would wear a less gloomy brow, ride oftener through the town on his black horse, and even sometimes be seen in the little church, the one nearest to his estates. But these times never lasted long; the fair face would disappear, the graceful form be met no more, the sweet song be hushed; and then the troubled people shook their heads, and murmured under their breath that another wife had been disposed of!

"Upon my word, my dear," said the clergyman's wife, as she told me the story, "that poor man could not even have a week's visit from any one of his favourite cousins (and a fine family they are, too, the Barbe-Bleues of Sussex; half a dozen girls at least) but what, when the visit ended, the whole town was agog, sure that the terrible Barbe-Bleue had made away with another wife. I do certainly believe they have had him married at least seven times!"

So it went on year after year, and Doctor Barbe-Bleue had long left his youth behind him. Moody and irritable at times, and at times with a strange dark patience on his brow, he lived his lonely life in his ancestral halls, seeking no friends, sought of none, but creating a world for himself in his hidden pursuits, whatever they might be. And so he might have been living even to this very day, but for the sweet faith and unsuspecting heart of little Patty Dimock, which took her straight into the lion's jaws.

II.

MRS. DIMOCK, the widow of gallant Colonel Dimock, who fell in battle at the Crimea, lived with her two daughters in a pretty country-seat just on the edge of N. She had two sons besides, but they were almost always away from home, one having a commission in the army,

and the other in the navy. Mrs. Dimock was a gentle, dignified lady, who wore her black gracefully, and brought up her girls unexceptionably. Anne, the elder, was tall and slender, with a handsome, clear-cut face and an imperious temper; while Patty, the younger, was a happy, sunshiny girl, too heedless and impulsive sometimes perhaps, but sweet and sound at heart.

"Patty," said Anne, one bright summer's morning, "let us go out, and try to find some pine-cones. I certainly must get that picture-frame done for Hedley before he has his furlough!"

"With all my heart," said Patty, flinging down a dress she was trimming, "but where can we get them? Our pine-tree was stripped long ago."

"We can go over into Squire Lorimer's park," answered Anne.

"But there is not a pine-tree in it," cried Patty, who knew all the neighbours' grounds by heart.

"There is a pine on Sinclair's place, and the Brents have larches," suggested Mrs. Dimock, in a languid way, looking up from her morning letters.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Patty, "Lillie Sinclair uses cones a great deal faster than we do; I am sure she needs all hers. And as for the Brents, we wouldn't touch theirs if they begged us to. They make such a to-do over everything."

"Very well," said Anne in her decisive manner, "I have heard that there are pines up in the Barbe-Bleue forest, and we will go there and get cones."

"Oh!" cried Patty, "suppose the terrible Barbe-Bleue himself should come out and catch us. I'm afraid to go there, Anne."

"Nonsense!" said Anne, "we shall only go a little way in the forest, and he never walks there. Even if he met us, he would not think of speaking to us. He never speaks to anybody."

Mrs. Dimock made no objection, and Patty was soon kindled to a state of high glee over the daring expedition, while Anne moved about as serenely as if she were going to church. They made a pretty picture as they started off with their baskets—Anne looking so proud and graceful, and Patty with her golden curls blowing about her face, now running a few steps ahead, and then back again to keep by her sister's side.

Gloomy enough the Barbe-Bleue forest looked when they reached its edge; the deep shadows within seemed warning them away, but there was the twitter of a bird's song farther on, and a tempting mossy path through the undergrowth. Anne pushed ahead, intent on cones, and Patty followed close behind, half-timid, half-curious. There were great oak trees, and thrifty maples, walnut trees and chestnut trees, so thickly growing that their boughs interlaced above; but not a pine in sight.

"I suppose the pines grow farther up," said Anne, and they followed the winding path on and on. The tall trees cut off the view so that they did not see how gradually they were drawing nearer and nearer to the old gray castle itself. But in truth it was close at hand.

"Oh, there are larches!" cried Patty, at a sudden turn in the path, and they pressed on with new enthusiasm, till at last they stood beneath the graceful green boughs loaded down with the rich brown cones.

"Delightful!" exclaimed Anne, and setting down her basket, she began rapidly to pull off the cones with her little white hands. Patty, springing up, caught hold of one of the lower boughs, and drawing it down so that she could climb to a seat upon it, threw herself back on the little green twigs and swung there in careless content.

"Suppose Barbe-Bleue should come and catch you," said Anne, threateningly.

"Patty laughed a long merry laugh, that ran through the glade, and echoed over and over, making her still instantly and half-frightened at her own boldness.

"Hush!" said Anne, growing pale, "I hear a footstep!"

In fact, Doctor Barbe-Bleue was just then taking his morning walk, and hearing the unaccustomed sound of that delicious laugh, he began to look where it came from. Stooping under the low branches, and pushing through the undergrowth, his bushy black beard and frowning shaggy eyebrows suddenly appeared to the terrified girls, like a dreadful vignette framed in bristling laurel leaves. An instant after, he had emerged entirely, and stood there staring at them.

"We beg your pardon, sir," said Anne, discreetly, "we came in search of pine-cones, and if you will let us take home what we have gathered, we will esteem it a favour."

And scarcely waiting for an answer, she took up her basket and beckoned to Patty, determined to beat a retreat as quickly as possible. But Doctor Barbe-Bleu, with a gleam in his eyes, quickly stepped before her, and abruptly seizing her basket, said in a voice which was neither harsh nor roaring, but really quite pleasant:

"Allow me, then, young ladies, to accompany you as far as the road. There are many paths in the forest, and it is easy to lose one's way."

And so the terrible Barbe-Bleue had caught them after all, and they found themselves perforce meekly walking along with him under the tall trees. Anne stepped on in stately silence, though her heart beat faster than usual, and Patty tripped after, quickly getting over her alarm, and enjoying the situation. In fact, it struck her as so very comical, that, in spite of herself, she laughed again, that sweet, girlish ringing laugh.

Barbe-Bleue stopped, and bent his keen eyes upon her.

"So it was you who laughed?" he said, simply.

"Yes," said Patty, half-saucily, though she blushed; "I was thinking

how funny it seems for us to be walking in your woods with you, and you don't eat us up!"

"Patty!" exclaimed her sister, in reproachful horror, while Barbe-Bleue frowned; but the next moment he laughed too, and after that there was not so much restraint.

When they reached the road at last, where the basket was to be delivered up, Anne, in a sort of instinctive fear that he would think them two mere adventurers, said with graceful dignity:

"I am sure, sir, that our mother, Mrs. Dimock, will feel very much obliged when we tell her of your kindness."

"Oh," said he, bluntly, yet quite as if he were pleased, "then you are the daughters of poor Colonel Dimock? He was my best friend when we were schoolboys together. He was a brave fellow!"

From that moment Patty liked him; and when, with an awkward bow, he plunged back into the forest, she and Anne could talk of nothing else but their odd adventure till they reached their own door. And after they went in they had to begin all over again, and tell the whole story to the wondering Mrs. Dimock.

"I remember," she said, musingly, "your father would always say there was more good in Doctor Barbe-Bleue than people gave him credit for. But he is a very singular man."

Next day there were sent from the castle a basket of fresh, perfect pine-cones, and another basket of delicious hot-house grapes, with a card addressed, "To the daughters of my old friend."

Ah, Barbe-Bleue was a sly fox after all; he knew how to send a gift so that it could not be refused. The next day more grapes came, and a profusion of lovely flowers.

"Dear me, it must be a palace of delight up there," said Anne, as she dropped grape after grape into her mouth.

"Isn't he generous!" said Patty.

The next day, Doctor Barbe-Bleue himself came, "to pay his respects to the widow of his old friend," and though Mrs. Dimock confessed that she could not understand his nature at all, still she could not deny that he appeared honest and friendly. Ah, the poor Doctor! cannot you guess what had happened to him? He could not forget the two fair faces that shone upon him so suddenly in the forest—he could not forget that sweet, ringing laugh. He wanted to hear it again, and again.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Anne, one day, when more japonicas and roses came; "I do believe the man is in love with one of us. Which can it be? Would *you* marry old Barbe-Bleue, Patty?"

"No, indeed!" said Patty, quickly.

But one day before long, Mrs. Dimock sought her daughters with a grave, troubled face, an open letter in her hands. Doctor Barbe-Bleue had written, asking the hand of her younger daughter in marriage.

"And it is really a very kind letter," said the poor lady ; "he addresses me with the greatest consideration, and offers the most generous settlements. But it is of no use. How can I soften the refusal so as not to wound him?"

"Why need you refuse him at all, mamma," said Anne, dryly ; "it is a very fine chance for Patty. See how she blushes over it!"

Mrs. Dimock looked inquiringly at her youngest daughter. Patty shrank back, and said confusedly :

"Oh, no, mamma, I never could marry him. He is so old, and so fierce and gloomy. And it is just like a dark prison up there ! Besides, I scarcely know him at all ; and I don't want to marry him!"

"Very well," said her mother, sighing, "I will write to him that you do not feel sufficiently acquainted with him to entertain his proposals."

"I wouldn't marry him," said Anne ; "his wives disappear mysteriously, you know !" And she laughed provokingly, while poor Patty felt more like crying.

That evening, Patty stood sadly at the window, looking up at the forest, and the dark outline of the tower against the moonlit sky, when Anne came up, and in her gentle sarcastic voice, said :

"What ! moping because there will be no more grapes and roses ?"

"No, indeed," replied Patty, stoutly ; "but I am sorry to have made an old friend of papa's feel sad."

"Oh," said Anne, laughing, "the old friend knows how to take care of himself ! He has just been here to tell mamma, that in order for you to become better acquainted with him, he invites us all to pass the day with him at the castle ; and he will invite all the gentry about here also, and make a grand fête of it, to convince you that the castle is not so gloomy a place as you may have thought it. There's chivalry for you, my dear ! indeed, if it were not for the ghosts of the wives, I think one might really live quite comfortably with rich old Barbe-Bleue !"

"You ought not to talk about him so," said Patty, indignantly.

III.

So there was a fêté-day at the Barbe-Bleue castle ; and great was the curiosity and smothered excitement among those who so unexpectedly found themselves there. Besides the Dimocks, there were Squire Lorrimer, and all his family ; Lillie Sinclair, and her brother ; the Brents ; the Hallams ; the Rector, and his wife ; and a number more, comprising all, in fact, whose good opinion Mrs. Dimock would be likely to prize. The castle doors were thrown wide open ; the rarest flowers were heaped up everywhere in such profusion that their subtle fragrance pervaded all the place ; musicians were playing both in-door and out ; and both the hall and the lawn before the entrance were prepared for those who chose to dance. The guests wandered up and down at their

will, wondering and admiring ; everywhere the noiseless servants were ready to wait upon them, and their kind host exerted himself to make the day a bright one to all. For the gentlemen, there were billiard-tables and cigars ; and the ladies were free to examine and admire the choice china and silver, and the costly upholstery. There were libraries full of books, there were glowing carpets softer than six inches deep of moss would have been, there were marble statues in the corners, and dainty frescoes over all the walls and ceilings, with carved work wrought by a master hand. At intervals delicious ices were served to the guests, wherever they might be scattered, and tiny cups of coffee with pure fragrant aroma. Then, in the middle of the afternoon, there was the grand banquet, to which all assembled in the spacious dining-hall, and at which the host presided. The courses were magnificent, the wine most precious ; and there was scarcely a person there that day who did not extol Barbe-Bleue to the skies, and who did not envy him a little too. Nothing was heard or seen of his mysterious studies and strange experiments ; in fact, no one was invited to go up into the tower, but that they did not remember till afterwards. Great was the curiosity felt among the guests as to what had moved the Doctor to prepare this fête ; but no one knew except himself and the Dimocks, and they kept their own counsel.

"Patty, I'll never forgive you if you don't take him after this," whispered Anne, at every new surprise and delightful display. But Patty felt bewildered and uncomfortable—it seemed strange and unreal to her ; and Doctor Barbe-Bleue had hardly spoken to her since they came. Mrs. Dimock was highly gratified by all she saw, and the Doctor's possessions threw such a glamour over him in her eyes, that he seemed to her as young and handsome and winning as a fairy prince. She only wished her sons were there too, to see all this splendour ; and in her own mind she determined that Patty must never be allowed to throw such a chance away.

"I wonder where his wives are buried," whispered Frank Sinclair to Anne Dimock, but she discreetly pursed up her pretty lips and bade him not to jest on such topics. For her part she was not at all sure that Doctor Barbe-Bleue had ever been married at all. It was growing dark ; curious lanterns were hung up in the trees, and all the guests were gathered on the great stone steps before the castle to see the display of fireworks which was about beginning, when Doctor Barbe-Bleue came suddenly to where Patty was standing alone. Drawing her arm in his, he led her to one of the deep alcoves, where, screened by the heavy curtains, they could remain undisturbed.

"I hope you have had a pleasant day," he said, in his abrupt manner.

"Yes," answered the young girl, looking rather wearily up at a rocket.

"Does the castle seem so very gloomy now you have seen it?" he asked.

"Oh, no, not gloomy," said Patty, dreading what questions might come next.

"And so you don't feel acquainted with me?" was the next question.

"No, that I don't!" said Patty, glancing up for a moment in the old archway that had charmed him so much.

"Dear child," he said, rather awkwardly; but that Patty did not mind, "if you knew me better, you would know a man whose life has been thwarted and darkened; a man whose heart was once warm, but it has been wounded and battered till it has grown hard in self-defence; a man who feels that all his mistakes might be retrieved and his life made good and pure, if the love he seeks for should come now to bless it; if this little hand might lie in his for all the years to be."

And having finished his speech, Barbe-Bleue waited for his answer.

Patty's tender little heart was touched, and in her sweet compassion, almost before she thought, she laid her small, white hand in his broad palm, and did not draw it away again.

That night when the Dimocks reached home, Mrs. Dimock and Anne were prepared to assail Patty with a thousand arguments, entreaties, and commands, to accept the princely Barbe-Bleue. But in the very beginning of the attack she took them completely by surprise, by quietly stating that she had already promised to become his wife.

The town was in a flutter. Those who were guests at the fête, applauded and congratulated; those who had not been invited, were full of dark and malicious hints, which they whispered diligently in every ear. They said that Patty Dimock had better be shriven at her bridal, for there was no knowing how long Barbe-Bleue would suffer her to live. They hinted very plainly that his wealth alone induced her to sacrifice herself, and she would find it a dear bargain at that.

Mrs. Dimock and Anne held their heads very high, and would listen to nothing of all this; while Patty, dear child, was perfectly unconscious of the townspeople's gossip, she was so taken up with the new, strange life unfolding before her, and the constant devotion of her bridegroom-elect.

Doctor Barbe-Bleue wished the marriage to take place at once; and there was really nothing to prevent it, except that Patty would have liked to wait till her brothers came home on a furlough. But he told her she would see much more of them, if her wedding-trip was completed before they arrived, than if they were only present to see her married and to say Good-bye. So the objections were all smoothed away, and little Patty Dimock became Dr. Barbe-Bleue's wife.

They went off on a short pleasure-trip, visiting many beautiful and renowned places, which Patty had longed to see; but hastening

through them all, by mutual consent, longing most for the quiet of their own castle home. It was early in the fall when the Barbe-Bleue travelling-carriage drove rapidly through N., and Patty's sweet face peeped out eagerly, nodding to every friend she saw, till they turned into the ascending road leading up to the castle.

"Now we shall see, we shall see!" muttered the gossips.

IV.

"MAMMA," said Anne Dimock at breakfast one morning, "here is a note from Patty, and she wants me to come up to the castle to stay with her till Doctor Barbe-Bleue comes back. He is obliged to go away suddenly on business, and tells her to invite what company she pleases. I shall go of course, mamma?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Dimock, "make haste and pack up whatever you will need. I am very glad you are going to be with Patty alone, for I long to hear from the dear child's lips whether she is perfectly happy."

"Whether, in fact, there is any danger of her disappearing mysteriously yet," said Anne, with a slight laugh.

"How can you say such things, Anne?" remonstrated her mother, with a shudder. But Anne only laughed again, and went to get her clothes ready for the visit, after which she sat down to wait for the Barbe-Bleue carriage.

Doctor Barbe-Bleue's journey was indeed sudden. It was only the evening before that he told Patty he must go, and would be detained two or three weeks perhaps.

"But what shall I do, all alone, dear?" said Patty, with a childish pout.

"You must try to enjoy yourself, darling; invite some of your friends here, and live as happily as possible."

"And you will come back as quickly as you can?" she asked.

"Indeed I will, my pet. And now look here, for I must leave my keys with you, and you may use them to explore wherever you please. Here are the keys of the two great store-rooms; here those for the gold and silver plate, which is not used every day; here the keys of my strong boxes, where I keep my gold and silver; here those of my caskets, where my jewels are; and this is the master-key to all the rooms. But this little key is to the small room at the end of the passage on the ground floor. Examine everything, go everywhere else, but on no account open that little room. Do not ask me why; it is for your own happiness, and it would grieve me very much if you should disregard my wishes. You *must not* use the little key!"

"Do you forbid me, dear lord and master?" asked Patty, laying her hands fondly on his broad shoulders. Barbe-Bleue smiled, and then looked grave again.

"Yes, dear, I forbid you," he said gently, and then he kissed her and handed her the great bunch of keys. How pretty she looked as she took them from him with mock importance! It seemed to him that he had never seen her so sweet before, as now when he must leave her. She stood before him in her blue silk and boddiced waist, her golden hair half bound up and half falling loose in little curls upon her neck, the fairest creature he had ever seen, and all his own.

The next morning, after many embraces, he set out on his journey, and about an hour after that Anne came. She was all eagerness to see the splendours of Patty's home, and Patty was glad to gratify her, so taking the keys they went from room to room. They ran through the chambers, the closets, the store-rooms, each of which seemed more rich than the others. There were such beautiful tapestries, such stately beds, such richly-carved tables, and graceful little stands. Old paintings that would have made a connoisseur; rare exquisite statuary and bronzes; Cupids holding aloft great portfolios of engravings; shining mirrors, in which they could see themselves at full length, framed in gold and silver. Then the great arm-chairs and elegant sofas, covered with satin and brocade, were a constant invitation to Anne and Patty to nestle down among their soft pillows for a luxurious chat.

"Now let us examine the wardrobes," said Patty. "I have not seen them myself yet."

So they unlocked one after another, taking down and admiring all the magnificent velvets and stiff silks that the dead-and-gone ladies Barbe-Bleue for generations back had rejoiced in. Anne and Patty tried them on by turns, walking up and down before the tall mirrors, looking now like court dames of the fourteenth century, and now like Queen Elizabeth's ladies.

"My husband said I might do as I pleased with everything," said Patty; "so, sister Anne, you shall keep that black velvet dress you have on. It is so becoming, and fits as if it were made for you."

This made Anne feel highly good-natured, and she determined to wear the dress all day, while Patty, not to be outdone, put on a robe of beautiful shimmering sea-green silk, from which her sweet face rose like a white lily from its shrouding green leaves.

So the day flew swiftly by, and there were many things yet to be seen which they had to postpone to the morrow. In the evening the sisters sat together in Patty's room talking over the old times and the new.

"Whoever thought it would come to this," said Patty, laughing, "when we trespassed in the forest after pine-cones."

"And how stupid we were to be afraid of Doctor Barbe-Bleue," replied Anne. "By the way, Patty, have you ever been up in the tower where his light used to be seen burning all night?"

"Oh, yes," said Patty, "there is nothing but a study and a laboratory.

He keeps his medical books, and tries experiments. That's all it is."

"I shouldn't wonder if Hedley and Gilbert should come any day," said Anne, suddenly remembering her brothers; "it is time for their furloughs."

"Oh, how splendid that will be!" exclaimed Patty, clapping her hands. So they chatted away until late in the night, and then went to sleep with their arms around each other, just as they used to do when they were children together.

The next day they resolved to open the caskets which held the family jewels,—and a fascinating treat it was. There, in their soft velvet beds, lay sets of turquoise, and of amethyst, rubies and great red carbuncles, bracelets and wreathen work of old gold, and a full set—tiara, necklace and all—of pearls, and another of diamonds. With what exclamations of delight did they revel in all these treasures! But at length even that novelty became wearisome, and in perfect satiety of luxury Patty smothered a yawn.

"What does this little key belong to?" asked Anne, taking up the bunch.

"Oh, that?" said Patty, starting, "that belongs to a private room of my husband's, which he does not wish me to open."

"Ah!" said Anne, suspiciously, "now that is the very room I should want to see most of all."

"Oh, no!" replied Patty, shaking her head, "I would not look into it for the world."

But for all that, an insatiable desire began to possess her to know what the room contained. Why had Barbe-Bleue forbidden it? There surely could be nothing there to harm her. She might just peep in a little way, and he would never know. These thoughts kept creeping into her mind, and though she tried to forget them, at every pause in the conversation they would recur to her again. And there hung the little key so temptingly, just where she could easily slip it off the bunch, without even Anne noticing her. At last, under pretence of going to order a lunch, she slipped out of the room with the little key in her hand, and away she sped down the stairs, and through the passage, till she stood at the very threshold of the chamber. There, as she paused a moment, she seemed to hear her husband's grave voice as he said:

"It would grieve me if you should disregard my wishes. You *must not* use the little key!"

"Ah, he is so good, and I love him dearly," she murmured, hesitating; but even as she stood there the key seemed almost of itself to turn in her hand, and the door flew open. The shutters of the room were closed, so it was quite dark; but as her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, she took two or three steps inside, and looked cautiously around. Oh, horrible! against the wall there hung, two, three, yes, seven bleached

and ghastly skeletons. As she returned, in a shiver of faintness and affright, to leave the room, her trembling fingers dropped the key ; and in trying to find it again, a deadly horror seized her, and she screamed and swooned away upon the floor.

Anne heard the shriek, and running swiftly to seek her sister, found poor Patty in a lifeless heap on the threshold of the little chamber. Her quick wit comprehended at once that this was the forbidden room, and hastily dragging her sister out, she picked up the key and locked the door—not, however, before seeing the dreadful contents of the apartment. She shivered from head to foot.

"These, then," she thought in terror, "are those former wives of Barbe-Bleue who so mysteriously disappeared !"

As Patty began to revive, she supported her away from the fatal spot ; and once upstairs again in their luxurious chamber, they strove to collect their senses. Anne whispered her dreadful thoughts to Patty—but Patty, though terribly shaken and nervous, would not believe one word against her husband.

"No, there is some mistake, there is some mistake," she kept repeating over and over. "Oh, if I had only obeyed Barbe-Bleue, and never touched the little key !"

But these regrets came too late ; and the unhappy sisters, trembling with vague alarm as the night drew on, hovered together by the bright fire, and tried to keep up each other's courage.

"My advice," said Anne, "is, that you don't tell Barbe-Bleue that you unlocked the door."

"I will not at once," said Patty ; "but will try to get him to tell me about the room ; and then if he explains it all, I will tell him how I disobeyed."

The pale faces and cowering forms of the two sisters were but a sorry welcome to Doctor Barbe-Bleue, as he suddenly opened the door and stood before them. It seemed that he had been met on his journey by a messenger, who told him that the business on which he was going was already satisfactorily settled, and there would be really no need of his presence. So Doctor Barbe-Bleue joyfully retraced his way homewards, thinking, with a smile, what a pleasant surprise it would be to his little wife.

He strode softly up the stairs, and along the corridor, and flinging open the door, strode into the room, his great blue-black beard roughened by the wind, and his eyes gleaming with fun. If his wife and sister-in-law looked more terrified than rejoiced at this startling arrival, he did not appear to notice it.

"What a delightful surprise !" exclaimed Anne, who was first to recover composure, for she had really a fine talent for diplomacy.

"What a delightful surprise !" quavered Patty, like a poor little echo ; but when Barbe-Bleue lifted her in his strong arms and kissed

her, she nestled her head down on his shoulder with a momentary feeling that here after all was her protector, and that he would take care of her.

Then Anne rang for a hot supper to be brought, and they all sat down, and chatted gaily. Doctor Barbe-Bleue had also another little surprise for his wife. He had stopped a moment at her mother's door on his way to the castle, thinking perhaps Patty might be there, and Mrs. Dimock had given him a note for her daughter, which said that Hedley and Gilbert had just come home on their long-desired furlough, and were all-impatient to see their sisters, so Patty might expect them very early the next morning. Anne and Patty exchanged glances after reading this note, and then Patty felt provoked to think she should have glanced at her sister so meaningly, for it seemed to imply a distrust of her husband, and she drew closer to his side.

So the evening passed off very pleasantly after all. But the next morning all Patty's tremors revived, when Doctor Barbe-Bleue asked for his bunch of keys. After a moment's hesitation she produced them. But that terrible Barbe-Bleue saw that her hand trembled, and he at once guessed what had happened.

"How is it, my dear," he asked, very kindly, "that the key of the small apartment is not among the rest?"

Now when Anne had locked the door of that dreadful room, in her haste and trepidation, she had dropped the key in her pocket, and neither she nor Patty had thought to replace it on the bunch. "Is it not there?" replied poor Patty, as if surprised, "then I must have left it upstairs on my table."

"Be so good as to get it for me then, my dear," said Barbe-Bleue, with a forced calmness of manner which only alarmed her the more.

She ran up-stairs and hurriedly told Anne what had occurred. Anne, concealing her dismay, drew the key from her pocket; when, as if to add to their uneasiness, they espied a deep dark stain on one side of it, which neither remembered seeing when it hung upon the bunch. They dipped it in a silver bowl of water that stood near, and rubbed it with the finest soap, but all in vain, for the stain remained as visible as ever.

"Oh," said Anne, "how I wish our brothers would come!"

When Patty dared delay no longer, she took the key to her husband. He looked down upon her fondly as she stood before him in her pretty tremors and blushes, but after he had examined the key, his brow became troubled.

"How came this stain upon it, my love?" he asked, gravely. And Patty could only falter forth that indeed she did not know.

"Then I am afraid I can tell you," said Doctor Barbe-Bleue. "Have you not paid a visit to the forbidden chamber?"

Poor little Patty burst into tears, and clinging to her husband she hid her face on his bosom, and trembling and sobbing confessed all that she

had done. For a moment there was an ominous silence, and then Doctor Barbe-Bleue, putting her gently from him, said with a sigh :

"Then I must explain it all to you, Patty, which I never meant to have to do. You must have thought it very singular to find such a chamber of horrors ?"

"Yes," whispered Patty, shivering.

Then the honest, blundering Barbe-Bleue told her all about it. He told her how, during the long years of his seclusion from the world, which had made him gloomy, moody, and unsocial, he had devoted himself to the mysterious delights of his profession, making deep researches into the unknown, poring over ancient dingy volumes of Esculapius and Paracelsus, up in his lonely tower. Sometimes, dipping into alchemy, he had spent whole nights watching intently the seething crucible upon the hot fire, with its costly contents. Sometimes he was wholly absorbed in studying the human frame, hoping to make some new discovery to benefit the world. And it was for this that he had procured those bleached skeletons from his old medical college; each representing a different race, to assist him in his speculations. These were the pursuits he lived for, in these his very soul had been wrapped up.

"Then what made you hide them in that little room ?" asked Patty, who was fast recovering her pretty, coaxing ways.

So Doctor Barbe-Bleue, with a penitent caress, told her how afraid he was that his little bride, his new-found treasure, would learn to fear him and to shrink from him if he kept up those strange pursuits after they were married ; he did not wish to keep anything in his favourite tower that would make his darling dislike to enter it, and he thought that she, so child-like and unscientific, might be nervous at night sometimes if she knew those skeletons were under the same roof with her. So he had ordered all these uncanny things to be carried down and stored away in that little room on the ground floor, the skeletons, the crucible, and many of the acids and other chemicals which he never meant to use again. There they were to remain locked up, and he had never intended that she should discover the contents of the room. All this story Doctor Barbe-Bleue told quite humbly, half afraid that Patty even now would take a dislike to him.

"Then I should just like to know, sir, why you left the key on the bunch with all the rest ?" she said archly, pulling his whiskers.

"I was going to take it off," he replied, meekly, "and then it seemed like distrusting you, so I put it back again, and asked you not to use it."

Patty laughed that sweet, happy laugh, that was always music to her husband's ears. She laughed so loud that Anne, who was trembling up-stairs, heard it, and gathering courage came down to see how things were going on. At the sight of her pale face, Patty laughed still more,

and then controlled herself, lest Barbe-Bleue should begin to be curious and find out what dark suspicions Anne had entertained. Then Doctor Barbe-Bleue explained it all over again to Anne, and the second explanation was much easier than the first.

"But what stained the key?" said Anne, after the first sensation of relief.

"Oh, that was done by some acid," replied the Doctor, carelessly. "You will probably find a broken bottle that held some on the floor, if you wish to look. I remember hearing something fall as I came out the other day."

But Anne did not wish to look. She was quite content. Only she expressed a desire to visit forthwith the haunt up in the tower, where her brother-in-law had spent so many hours. So the three ran gaily up the circling stairs, reaching at last the quiet, comfortable study of Doctor Barbe-Bleue. Patty began to dust the books with a pretty, house-wifely air, while Anne, having looked around sufficiently, opened a narrow door, found another tiny staircase, which she was told led out on the very top of the tower.

"How splendid!" she exclaimed. "I am going right up to view the prospect; and perhaps I shall see Hedley and Gilbert coming."

So up the staircase she disappeared, and Patty went on dusting books, till the Doctor stopped her with a kiss.

"Oh, fie!" she said, shaking her curly head at him; and then she called out loudly: "Anne, sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?"

And Anne replied, though the wind almost blew her words away, "I see nothing but the bright sun and the waving tree-tops."

"She couldn't see them if they *were* coming," said Barbe-Bleue.

"Oh yes, she could," said Patty, and she called out again: "Anne, sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?"

"I see," replied Anne, "a great cloud of dust moving this way."

"Is it Hedley and Gilbert?" asked Patty.

"Dear me, no," cried Anne, who began to be impatient, "it is only some sheep after all."

Barbe-Bleue and Patty laughed, and then Patty said she was afraid Anne would take cold up there in the wind, and she meant to hurry her down, so she called out again:

"Anne, sister Anne, do you see anybody coming yet? If you don't, do come down; it is cold up there."

But Anne replied gaily:

"I see two horsemen coming up the hill. I know it is Hedley and Gilbert, and I am going to wave my handkerchief to make them ride faster."

But Barbe-Bleue and Patty, when they heard that the brothers were really coming, hurried down from the tower to be ready with a welcome. They met them at the castle door, and Patty, blushing with her new

honours, introduced her brothers to her husband with such a pretty air of pardonable pride that they all loved her more than ever. Then Anne too appeared, and the whole party spent a merry, happy day together, Barbe-Bleue in his hospitality treating his guests so well that his new brothers-in-law at once voted him a capital fellow and as generous as a prince.

Since then there have never been any more secrets, any more doubts, but Doctor Barbe-Bleue and his beautiful little wife seem to grow more devoted to each other every day; so that after all his stormy life he is at last a perfectly happy man. He lavishes upon her everything that heart can wish, and to their stately and magnificent home their few true and tried friends are always welcome.

But the old distrust still lurks among the townspeople. You may hear it whispered as persistently as ever through all the under-currents of society. And even the simple and touching incidents which I have here related to you have been distorted by Rumour into a base calumny, which is creeping into every ear. Well might Virgil say, though centuries ago :—

“Fama, malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum :
Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo.”

But the Barbe-Bleues hear little of all these things, and perhaps would only smile at them if they heard more. Yet it is none the less an injustice, and I, who during my sojourn at N. have so thoroughly learned the goodness and nobility of this charming pair, cannot refrain from doing what I feel to be my duty in setting forth the facts contained in this narrative. So, to the best of my small power at least, the old wrong shall be righted in this narrative.

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NOT LOST.

The look of sympathy, the gentle word
 Spoken so low that only Angels heard ;
 The secret act of pure self-sacrifice,
 Unseen by men, but marked by Angels' eyes ;
 These are not lost.

The sacred music of a tender strain
 Wrung from a poet's heart by grief and pain,
 And chanted timidly, with doubt and fear,
 To busy crowds who scarcely pause to hear,
 It is not lost.

The silent tears that fall at dead of night
 Over soiled robes which once were pure and white ;
 The prayers that rise like incense from the soul,
 Longing for Christ to make it clean and whole ;
 These are not lost.

The happy dreams that gladdened all our youth,
 When dreams had less of self and more of truth ;
 The childlike faith so tranquil and so sweet,
 Which sat like Mary at the Master's feet ;
 These are not lost.

The kindly plans devised for others' good,
 So seldom guessed, so little understood ;
 The quiet stedfast love that strove to win
 Some wanderer from the woeful ways of sin ;
 These are not lost.

Not lost, O Lord, for in Thy city bright,
 Our eyes shall see the past by clearer light ;
 And things long hidden from our gaze below,
 Thou wilt reveal, and we shall surely know
 They were not lost.

SARAH DOUDNEY.

